➜Next Gen

Next Generation Magazine

PlayStation2

What do US developers *really* think?

DREAMCAST HORROR

RESIDENT EVIL
CODE VERONICA

We reveal the scariest game of 2000 with *six* pages of exclusive pics

Plus!

32 pages of previews!
NHL 2K, Eternal Arcadia, WarCraft III, Republic, and 16 more
Is Dreamcast Sega's last system?
The CEO speaks

30+
Games Reviewed
Dreamcast: NBA 2K, Slave Zero, Sega Rally 2
PSX: Medal of Honor, Crash Team Racing

Dreamcast ■ Nintendo 64 ■ PlayStation ■ PC ■ Arcade ■ Online

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Next Generation Magazine

→News

All the news that's fit to print, and only one or two stories that aren't (just to keep our edge)

→Alphas

This is how we say "preview"

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Our featured stories

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Unbiased reviewing at its best

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After all the excitement, here's a little something to let you down easy

Millennium? What do you mean, millennium?

Welcome to 2000 — only one year to go until the new millennium. Other folks may try telling you it starts January 1, 2000, but you come to **Next Gen** for the truth. That's what we give you, and have been giving you for the past five years. For a look back, check out Retroview and page 25 of News.

By now, the year's big games have either shipped or slipped to February and March. Meaning crunch time is either over, or it's been extended for 60 more days. For an insiders' look at the brutal task of shipping a game — the 18-hour days, the endless meals of pizza, fistfights — check out the war stories on page 80.

Capcom's clearly been in the throes of crunch time for a while: *Resident Evil: Code Veronica* not only looks scary as hell, it's also a good example of just what we can expect from Dreamcast in the coming months. And what can you expect from **Next Generation** in the coming months? Exactly what we've been giving you for five years: honest, hype-free reporting on the most important topic on the planet: games.

Chris Charla

IT'S ALL GUNS GIRLS & GLORY

- Smooth combination of rapid-fire action and puzzle solving.
- Customize the difficulty settings for both action and adventure.
- Immerse yourself in a stunning 3D world.
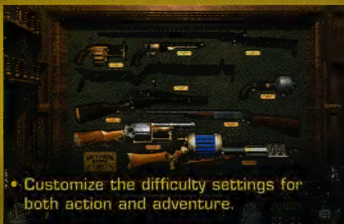
■ There goes Maurice Greene, the fastest man in the world. Konami picked Greene, world record holder in the 100-meter dash, to burn up the track for Konami's motion-capture cameras. His moves will be found in Konami's forthcoming PlayStation2 *Track and Field* game. No word on how Maurice limited his running to 60 FPS, though

ESPN and Konami join forces

Can Konami finally make the ESPN brand work in videogames?

→ Disney owns ESPN. And for all of Walt's company's ability to make the best animated feature films the world has seen, it has spent millions on videogame development to no avail. So when Disney/ESPN decided to partner with developer Radical Entertainment two years ago, the partnership made sense. Radical would deliver quality sports titles, and Disney would provide the marketing and distribution muscle.

But then Disney changed strategies and backed out, leaving Radical holding the bag with no distribution and even less cash. It was nearly a deathblow to the company; while Radical is restructuring, the company is a shadow of its former self, and it seemed the failed deal left Disney management even less interested in marketing and distributing videogame software, which is probably part of the reason the company has partnered with Konami. As a full-blown publisher, Konami has the development, marketing, sales, and distribution teams in place to deliver ESPN sports products; all Konami needed to

compete with the bigs guys was a brand.

Enter ESPN, widely respected by sports enthusiasts, and arguably the only license that can really compete with EA's years of branding efforts. Videogame publishers have been after the license for years, but Disney Interactive kept it closely guarded during the years it aspired to have its own sports studio. In this partnership, Konami gets exactly what it needs: instant credibility after years of poorly branded sports titles. Despite several great games like *J-League* soccer and *NBA In The Zone*, the company hasn't been able to capture the audience that EA's titles have won over. However, with a new marketing team on board at Konami that is

PlayStation2:
Hardware heaven or hell?

Developers with "the kit" share their opinions on the new system

"I just got off the phone with [Sony's] Phil Harrison 10 minutes ago," says a top third-party development executive who asked to be kept anonymous, "and now I'm thinking even more about doing Dreamcast games."

The statement goes a long way to explaining the frustration U.S. developers are feeling at the continuing delays they're facing getting PlayStation2 development kits. (Although, to be honest, it also goes a long way towards explaining how surprised most developers have been at Dreamcast's rapid sales — rumors about EA ramping up development are even running around again.)

It seems that Sony's development kits are still very difficult to come by. And those select developers that do have kits have very preliminary ones.

"The early dev kits don't have the I/O," says another developer, "so all we can do is put small code snippets onto the system and run them."

According to the developer, as of press time, no US team had a full development kit. And it would be the new year before anyone had one. "I need a launch title," said the executive we quoted at the top, "and if I don't get a dev kit soon, I'm screwed."

> ## "I need a launch title, and if I don't get a development kit soon, I'm screwed"

■ In the sequel to *Abe's Oddysee*, *Munch's Oddysee* for PlayStation2, Mudokens are still being persecuted by those evil Sligs — only now in a realtime, fully 3D world. Lorne Lanning of OddWorld decribes *Munch's Oddysee* as a "gene splicing of action, adventure, RPG, strategy, and emulation, with Hollywood storytelling and production value sprinkled all over it." It is scheduled to be ready for the US launch

Despite the frustrations, most of the developers we talked to were still enthusiastic about the system itself, even with early kits.

"The raw horsepower is unbelievable, even on these preliminary systems," says Alex Hastings, VP of Software at Insomniac Games. "Whenever you get a new console, you start thinking, 'OK, how can I get this system to do the absolute maximum that it can do? With a system this complex and this powerful, it's an overwhelming task. People like me have to change our perspective a little bit, and not say, 'How can we get this to run 100%?' but 'How can we come close?'" The answer comes from gaming's past: assembly-level programming is the only way to manage the multiple parallel systems of PlayStation2. "When you're up in C, you're a step removed from the hardware, and it's much trickier to keep track of what everything's doing."

Another programmer points out that the graphics chip, specifically designed for vector processing, is made for assembly. "You can take an entire vector of four numbers, and multiply it by another vector of four numbers, in one operation. That's a lot more than you could do in C."

So how will vector operations improve games? Naughty Dog co-founder and chief programming guru Andy Gavin gives some examples.

"There's a lot more opportunities to do fancy computations," Gavin says,

"and that's overall what's meant by behavior synthesis and emotion synthesis. It's now possible to do things like detect where the ground is, and move the characters' legs to stand on the ground correctly, inverse kinematics, or blend multiple animations on top of each other correctly. Or do fancy collisions of many particles, and fancy multi-pass renderings like surface effects that look really cool. What happens is each of those things is very complex, and there's a lot of math involved, a lot of programmer and artist time."

What about middleware? No one we spoke to said they were interested. "We've never been a big middleware believer," says Gavin, "largely because [middleware developers] have to develop something that works in many games, so it can never be as tuned or as precise and fast as the thing we might build to work only in our game."

Our development executive had a

spearheading the sports effort, that may change. Seasoned personnel are in position to better direct Konami's sports efforts in the US, and now there just may be another sports contender in the market besides EA and 989 Studios.

ESPN games will launch in spring 2000 with *Major League Baseball* and *NBA Basketball*, both for Sega Dreamcast, and *Major League Soccer* on Sony PlayStation. More titles will be launched in the fall, including "officially licensed league sports, as well as titles based on exclusive ESPN programming."

However, the company's already going head-first into *Track and Field* for PlayStation2. Already done is the motion-capture with top-ranked ath-

letes who will be competing in next year's Olympics, including Maurice Greene (see above photo for details). Ato Bolton, who took the Bronze in Atlanta in the 100 and 200 meters, is very close to Maurice's record; he was also on hand to lend his moves to the game. Bolton may have an edge: he's not only an avid videogame player, he's also a subscriber to **Next Generation**. Konami spent two days at the LA Coliseum with House of Moves, capturing motion data for the high jump, long jump, pole vault, hammer throw, and 110-meter hurdles, and more. Sadly, there's no word yet on what effect pressure-sensitive buttons will have on the game. **Next**Gen

■ **OddWorld is modeling intricate behavior models for the many NPC characters, as well as large landscapes that the developer wants players to feel "as if they are alive"**

similar opinion. In a nutshell, he told us middleware was essentially a Catch-22 that ensured mediocrity. "Developers who are going to be making the best games have the technical talent in-house to develop their own code," he says, while "those who rely on middleware don't have the expertise to deliver anything inspired anyway."

Hastings disagrees: while middleware is something he'd be unlikely to use, he doesn't necessarily think "it's a bad idea what Sony's doing, not requiring companies to be really good at the technical stuff. You could have a very creative company that just needs some technical help."

So what about the notion that with its multiple chips, PlayStation2 is more akin to development of the Saturn? "The Playstation2 architecture is very elegant, and extremely functional," Hastings says, "and that's a big difference versus the Saturn, which was sort kludgey, and never quite worked the way it was supposed to." Unlike Saturn, which had its extra processors added at the last moment, PS2 has been engineered from the ground up to be parallel. "Sure it's going to be challenging to take advantage of that," he continues, but "I think Sony is going to great lengths to make it pretty easy for programmers to get good performance, and then for those who really want to dig in, the sky's the limit."

Already, ambitious development houses like Naughty Dog and OddWorld Inhabitants have begun to develop the toolsets required to get top performance. Perhaps the finest example is Gavin's new language, GOAL (Game Oriented Assembly Lisp) the latest incarnation of his GOOL (Game Object Oriented Lisp) to create the *Crash Bandicoot* series.

"GOAL is, without a doubt," he boasts, "the most sophisticated games language ever written. Compiled-only, fully-interactive, full realtime, mixed-mode scheme in assembly language that supports every PlayStation2 feature. And we're writing one-hundred percent of our game in GOAL."

Gavin started writing GOAL 10 months ago. This is the "sixth or seventh" game machine he has written for, and he considers it by far the best, not only in power, but also in design. OddWorld President/Creative Director Lorne Lanning's sentiments are the same. His company has been planning a massive 3D world for *Munch's Oddysee* for quite a while, so OddWorld has made a big investment in building proprietary tools.

Considering the ambitious design

"I imagine six years from now, people will still be increasing performance on this machine"

plans for *Munch's Odysee*, a new toolset will be required to simulate the ecosystems and character behaviors Lanning is hoping to achieve. "GameSpeak will also now allow you to move around and manipulate a large number of characters," says Lanning, "in order to have them do your bidding and re-shape your landscape."

While the few demo movies OddWorld has released to the world show *Munch's* impressive level of detail, Lanning admits that there's still a lot to learn. "There are still things that we don't know about its tools and development kits," he says, "like audio."

In fact, none of the developers contacted for this article had yet to spend any time on the audio. We turned to composer/sound developer Tommy Tallarico, who has been preparing for audio work on the system.

"There's are really no limitations as to what can be done with sound on PlayStation2," says Tallarico. "It's a 2MB sound chip, at 4-to-1 compression, so it's actually 8 Megs of sound memory." Add to that the DVD storage capacity, and he has what he feels is room for everything.

"The excuse in the past has always been there hasn't been enough space," Tallarico says, "but now if you don't hear a sound effect for every single thing onscreen, then somebody is

doing something wrong."

Although Tallarico felt the original PlayStation sound driver provided by Sony was the best on any platform up to that point, he notes the the company is opening up the field to other audio technology partners.

"Sony is saying, 'If any of you other guys want to write kick-ass sound drivers also, by all means do that.' There are a couple of companies in the industry who rock for sound drivers, and they're working on PlayStation2 right now."

So, will the audio be more time-consuming to develop? Tallarico believes it may be for some people, but he feels that given the amount of time he spends trying to squeeze sound effects into the PlayStation, his work will be easier.

"The bulk of the work on PlayStation," he says, "is actually going in and chopping up the samples as small you can get them, so that they sound OK. Put them in the driver, downsample the shit out of them, and do all these tricks to get all the stuff to fit. That takes a tremendous amount of time. [On PlayStation2], we'll just be able to drop it right in."

Apart from sound, the Dual Shock2 is something the developers are just beginning to work with as well. Gavin admits the Naughty Dogs have begun

to experiment. "Because this machine comes with the Dual Shock," Gavin says "we're free to use the analog and the second analog at will, without excluding anyone. I think the analog control won't be as stiff, so characters will move more fluidly and appear lifelike with better blended animation."

Creating more lifelike, organic gameplay scenarios is the mantra at OddWorld. And Lanning is the type of visionary who can't wait for more of the technology that will enable games to break out of their box, replacing movies as the number-one form of entertainment.

"We always wish we had more VRAM, and we always wish we had more processing power, and we always wish we had better documentation," Lanning says, "but given the year we are living in and what else is available out there, this machine is truly amazing."

We'll give the last word to Hastings: "I imagine six years from now, people will still be increasing their performance on this machine. It's not going to plateau like other consoles." Sounds good to us.   **Next**Gen

IVERSON LEARNS FROM YOUR MISTAKES.

APPARENTLY, THAT'S A FULL TIME JOB.
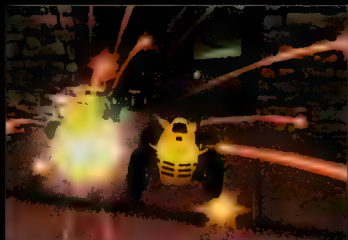
Sega **Dreamcast**
IT'S THINKING

//07.

SEGA SPORTS™
NBA 2K

Twenty-nine teams throw down in 28 arenas with 1300 motion-captured moves,
actual NBA coaches' playbooks and jawdropping action down to hand signals,
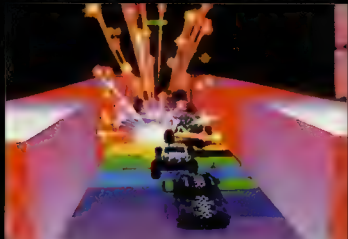tattoos and sneaker squeaks. Microwaves don't get this hot, son.

■ CRACKED IN THE USSR

Black-market game sales run rampant in Moscow

Garbushka flea market: a Russian smorgasbord of PlayStation piracy

→ There may not be a proliferation of Wal-Marts or Electronic Boutiques in the former Soviet Union, but that hasn't kept Russian gamers from waiting too long for the latest PC and PlayStation titles. On the contrary, they can pick them up almost immediately at a black-market superstore called Garbushka. Located in Moscow, Garbushka is a thriving flea market of pirated movies, games, and music CDs. It is a large park lined with merchants selling goods from rows of orange tents. It is a well-managed chaos with uniform prices and merchandise in almost every tent.

Garbushka is the place to go for a VHS copy of *Star Wars: Episode I*, nearly every stand had it. It's also a great place for CD-based games. As of October 28, you could find *Alpha Centauri: Alien Crossfire, Resident Evil 3: Nemesis, Metal Gear Solid: VR Mission, Age of Empires II, Ready 2 Rumble* (PlayStation), *Crash Team Racing*, and other new or soon-to-be-released games selling for 70 rubles — approximately US$3.

The creative merchants at Garbushka also sell multi-game CDs.

■ A seemingly normal Russian flea market is in fact a veritable den of pirated entertainment software

One disk, for instance, featured the PlayStation games *MDK, Tenchu, Excalibur 2555 A.D.*, and *Batman & Robin* all on one disk for 70 rubles. The games were in Russian and all of the games used the *Batman & Robin* soundtrack, but the games were otherwise perfect.

While the Soviet economy does remain in shambles, **Next Generation** doesn't believe this gives their citizens the right to openly peddle pirated software. Note to IDSA's Doug Lowenstein: with the help of George Lucas, your calls to the Kremlin might just be heard. — *Steve Kent*

■ BLACK MAGIC CHIPSETS

With a new handful of cards — can 3Dfx pull an ace?

The next Voodoo

→ Speed or beauty, frames-per-second or color-depth — that's the conundrum that has fueled the intense marketing propaganda in the 3D graphics wars during the last year. On one side, 3Dfx has been championing gamers, declaring that nothing less than 60 frames-per-second will do. On the other side, Nvidia and ATI are claiming that games are more fun when the 3D is more realistic with more colors and higher-resolution textures. Recently, cards such as the TNT 2 and the GeForce have done an effective job of muscling their way into the realm of high-end 3D cards — an area once dominated by 3Dfx alone. With the company's next generation of accelerators, 3Dfx aims to do nothing less than steal back the "3D power" crown.

First up is the Voodoo4. The Voodoo4 line consists of two nearly identical boards — one for AGP slot installations and one for PCI slot installations. Dubbed the Voodoo4

■ Voodoo5s are powerful enough to support T-Buffer motion smoothing

4500, both will carry 32MB of RAM, support 32-bit color rendering and 3Dfx's FXT1 texture compression format for clearer 3D visuals. On the power front, the boards also manage to push out a heft 332 megapixels per second for some nice visuals.

The Voodoo5 5000 series is virtually a repeat of the Voodoo4 4500 — each comes with 32MB of RAM, and there are also AGP as well as PCI versions. The big difference is the addition of a second on-board graphics chipset running in SLI (Scan Line Interleave). 3Dfx expects the SLI mode to double the already impressive fill rate to 664 megapixels, which allows new features like the innovative T-Buffer technology that greatly smoothes out motion effects and allows full-screen anti-aliasing, which eliminates jagged edges in 3D games.

Moving further into the 3D high-end, the AGP-only Voodoo5 5500 raises the amount of RAM to 64MB, and its SLI chipsets are likely run at an even faster MHz speed that the 5000. Topping out the new line is the Voodoo5 6000. In a consumer graphics card first, the 6000 packs four Napalm chips onto one card to get a fill rate of a mindblowing 1.3 gigapixels per second, and also increases the on-board RAM to 128MB. Unlike the GeForce chip, the Voodoo5's power is accessible by any game — not just ones specifically programmed for the card. For processing-mad gamers who won't settle for second fastest, this card is the Holy Grail.

When contacted by *NG*, 3Dfx would not comment about its new cards prior to their official unveiling. It is rumored that several of these SKUs could hit before the holidays — providing some heat for Nvidia's much-touted GeForce cards (see review, pg. 20). — *George T. Chronis*

■ BITS FROM THE EDGE

News Bytes

→ **The US government is celebrating the end of the millennium** by toppling Microsoft. In federal court this November, Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson declared that the company has and wields monopoly power in the computing industry. Next, the judge found that the Earth is round, the sun rises in the east, and Keanu Reeves "isn't very talented." **The industry is all abuzz** that Infogrames General Director and CEO Bruno Bonnell is planning to ring in the New Year (which also happens on January 1 in France) with the purchase of GT Interactive. The floundering New York company had been spotted in rumored buyouts by Hasbro, Electronic Arts, Havas Interactive, and French publishing giant Vivendi, but Bruno popped the question first (or at least, had the best dowry). **If you plan on playing games while traveling by air, better pack your favorite handheld system.** The Federal Aviation Administration has banned US airlines from installing the same type of entertainment system (which included

videogames) installed in the MD-11 Swissair plane that crashed off Nova Scotia in September of 1998. The ban applies specifically to MD-11 planes. As a precautionary measure, Swissair has disconnected the in-flight entertainment systems in its 15 remaining MD-11s as well as three Boeing 747s. The Canadian government is still investigating the crash and has yet to determine the cause. **Diablo fans will have nothing to celebrate this New Year.** Blizzard has announced that *Diablo II* won't be out until early next year. The only person

surprised that Blizzard didn't make a ship date was Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson. **Sony has big plans for the new century,** including a launch of PlayStation2 on the Internet. Sony has announced that starting March 4, 2000, its new console will be available online to Japanese consumers. The company will also sell games, both for PlayStation and PS2. **Sega's console plans may end with the New Year.** At a recent posh soiree in San Francisco, the chairman of CSK (primary holder of Sega Ltd. stock), Isao Okawa, proclaimed

Sega's future direction revealed

Sega Chairman Isao Okawa ruminates on a post-hardware future for Sega

➤ At a recent reception honoring the 1999 grant recipients of Okawa Foundation (see boxout), Sega Founder, Chairman, and CEO Isao Okawa revealed both his thoughts on the future of technology — the future of mankind in the 21st century is the network — and the future of Sega. Not surprisingly, the future of Sega is also the network, said Okawa.

Before we got to the future, though, we had to ask about the present. So, how does Okawa feel about Dreamcast's rapid sales in the US? "Generally, I am happy," he said. "But our manufacturing is not keeping up with the demand! I'd like to apologize to all the consumers who want our products and are having a hard time finding them! Mr. Irimajiri has recently been on several trips to see our suppliers in Korea and Tawain to see what he can do to expedite the supply chain." And the software?

"Again, I am happy, but what I am really excited about and have high hopes for are the future titles that will have network functions."

"Our expertise remains games and entertainment," continued Okawa, "but how the games are delivered may change. We may form a .com company in the US to lead these efforts — we are leading a lot or research in audio and video delivery mechanisms." Does that mean Sega is finished with hardware? "I can't really comment on that, but I will say the future doesn't necessarily lie in the hardware business. I think in the future there is the possibility of Sega becoming a software-only company — if you look in the future, after e-commerce, I think e-services will be the next trend. I want Sega to be there, and I think games may be one of the major reasons for that trend to take off, so we will still

NEW SEGA TECHNOLOGY

At the reception, Sega also unveiled its Zip drive add-on (it comes with two USB ports), a 10- and 100-base T compatible Ethernet module that replaces the standard modem and can be used for cable modem or DSL connectivity, and a prototype videocamera that produced about 15fps full-screen video with sound, although whether the two demo Dreamcasts were attached via modem or Ethernet isn't known. Also shown was a commercial virtual fish tank (virtual fish tanks are *everywhere* in Japan) that was driven by Dreamcast, featuring a touch-sensitive flat-screen display enabling you to tap on the virtual screen and scare the virtual fish.

be making a lot of efforts in games and entertainment, but that role may be redefined in time." So if Dreamcast were to fail, Sega would become a software-only company? "Well, regardless of how Dreamcast sells, we will make this shift! Online and networked entertainment are the future, and that is how we will compete in the future. It really doesn't matter how fast we sell hardware in regards to the speed with which we transition ourselves into the new networked century. But the bottom line is that the Dreamcast machine has a huge competitive advantage right now."

Speaking of competitors, what about Sony's and Nintendo's new systems? "Sony's machine has very high specs, but I'm not clear about just what their strategy is. Is it a game machine? Plus, Sony's price is not com-

petitive to Dreamcast, and with Dreamcast using a .25 micron process and Sony using .18 for PlayStation2, I think they will face manufacturing challenges. And with no modem included, I think they face other challenges."

And Nintendo? "Nintendo's focus is on Game Boy and small electronic games. Again, I don't see Nintendo's threat in networking or interactive online games. Sega is at least one year ahead of Sony and two years ahead of Nintendo in this area." And are online, multiplayer games really the key to success? The answer seems to be yes. "I think even with major one-player titles like *Final Fantasy*, there may be one more major iteration and that will be it. The entire landscape of what games are will change soon."
NextGen

to a stunned crowd of journalists that Dreamcast may be Sega's last console, even if it is wildly successful. (See story, above.) How this jibes with rumors we've heard about Dreamcast 2 already being in development in Tokyo is unclear. One thing is though: our source insists Sega is taking a page from Sony's book: Dreamcast 2 would be backwards compatible with Dreamcast software. **Whether there will be a console after Dreamcast or not,** Sega does have a New Year's gift for its fans. Iomega has now confirmed that the

Dreamcast Zip drive will come to the US. The drive, which at one point seemed unlikely to make it to America, will allow Dreamcast Internet users to store files and web favorites, cache websites, and archive email. **3DO just can't leave well enough alone —** at least, not if you ask federal District Court judge John S. Martin. Last year, the *BattleTanx* publisher ran a hilarious advertisement for the game that featured a Snuggle Bear-look-alike (the one from the fabric softener commercials) getting blown up by a tank. 3DO

voluntarily yanked the ad when Snuggle's owner, Unilever, filed for an injunction against the ad. In its advertisements for the game's sequel, *BattleTanx: Global Assault,* 3DO brought back the Snuggle look-alike who, once more, was terrorized by tanks. Judge Martin ruled that 3DO acted willfully in putting the bear back in ads and ordered 3DO to stop showing the ad. **And the company with the biggest plans for the new millennium is Interplay.** Recently acquired by Titus, Interplay has gone on to lose buckets of money — $17 million

last quarter, to be exact. The CEO of the company, Brian Fargo, announced with the losses that Interplay's turnaround plan centers on a revitalization as a console publisher. This is a new approach for the games industry. Everyone else who loses mountains of green reorganizes as an "Internet technology" company.

— Compiled by Aaron John Loeb,
Executive Producer,
www.DailyRadar.com
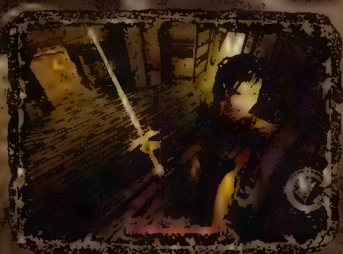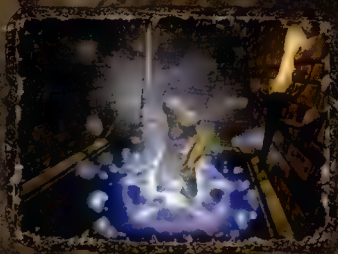
DRACONUS
CULT OF THE WYRM

Embark on an epic quest to unite the shattered
kingdoms of humanity. Bring a knowledge of the arcane
arts and a mastery of deadly swordplay to bear on the evil
that jeopardizes these last bastions of civilization. The vile
Dragon Lord has returned and in his shadow of impending
doom an unholy pestilence threatens all mankind.

- 15 levels featuring dynamic lighting and smoothly
integrated indoor and outdoor locations.

- Over 30 fierce enemies including incredibly detailed
archenemies like the Insect Queen and Dragon Lord.

- 22 spells, each with dramatic effects.

- Play as a warrior or sorceress and take advantage of
their unique abilities.

We know what you
CRAVE
ENTERTAINMENT

Arcadia

Aliens, Guns, Namco's Luge Run, and a Sega Safari

DON'T LUGE YOUR HEAD

➜ Namco has such an incredible R&D department of its own in Japan that when it licenses an outside game, you know it's got to be impressive. *Rolling Extreme DX*, a "street luge" simulator developed by Gaelco of Spain, was so good that Namco transformed it from an upright to a deluxe sitdown simulator. You actually sit on a luge that has foot pedals and attack buttons on the bars. The game flings you downhill at a blistering pace, letting you collect power-ups to boost speed and punching force. A variety of six tracks (each with hidden routes) adds to the fun.

CAN WE GIVE THE PEOPLE WHAT THEY WANT?

➜ Arcade videogame manufacturers have — understandably, perhaps — become increasingly schizophrenic about gun games in recent months. On the one hand, gun games have been among the most popular arcade fare, with titles like Konami's spectacular *Silent Scope* topping the coin-op popularity charts for half of 1999. On the other hand, arcade factories are supernervous regarding all that negative publicity about violent games — a public relations backlash that started even before the Columbine massacre and vastly accelerated afterward.

As a result, gun games whose R&D began two years ago are still in the pipeline, but factories are downplaying them to the public — and sometimes even to the arcades. *Silent Scope* was shown in a closet, literally, at its debut US trade show last spring, while Midway Games brought only two units of its new shoot-'em-up game *Invasion: the Abductors* to the arcade industry's fall expo (and Midway didn't put them out front, either). Namco, for its part, has been tooting the horn — weakly — for its new *Crisis Zone*, which features spectacular machine-gun bullet sprays and realistic damage. Experts are predicting that as state legislatures go back into the 1999-2000 session, some states will likely pass strict regulations or outright bans against video gun games in arcades.

MIDWAY'S LATEST INVASION

➜ Midway's new 3D gun game, *Invasion: the Abductors*, is notable for using real American cities as backgrounds — Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles — instead of generic urban scenes. You'll see real landmarks like L.A.'s Santa Monica Pier and Manhattan's famous skyline; you'll also see some especially nasty aliens invading your home turf. They look like a cross between barracudas and frogs, and those are the pretty ones. Their mission is nasty, too: steal human brains and integrate them into alien machines as a power source. This two-player upright features a couple of futuristic silver pistols that can, of course, be powered-up as you progress through the storyline. Action starts when motherships descend on various cities and the aliens hop out to "harvest the human crop." The game offers only four missions, but each has substantial depth, basically offering "a game within the game." Obviously one city represents one mission, so what's the fourth challenge? It's a secret excursion aboard one of the motherships, where (we hear) the alien boss baddies are the ugliest yet and may have captive humans stored in giant glass capsules.

■ Set in recognizable US cities, *Invasion: the Abductors* lets you save people from aliens bent on harvesting their brains (so why are they in L.A.?)

EARN YOUR (ZEBRA) STRIPES

➜ Can an action game really be exciting without blood and guts? A wild African adventure from Sega shows what the future of arcade videos might be like if anti-violence bills are passed by any of the half-dozen state legislatures that have threatened to ban gun games. Sega's *Jambo!Safari* is a deluxe sitdown simulator with a 50-inch monitor, running on a Naomi board. You drive a Jeep through a variety of terrain, chasing, capturing and subduing everything from lions to elephants to ostriches. There are 28 animals total, all of which are beautifully rendered. The idea is to get close enough to launch your rope snare via the control lever, then jerk the lever backward at precisely the right time to reel in the prey. Hint: they don't submit tamely. Also, you can only catch specified animals by quota, so there's a definite strategy required. Ready, set, Mogombo!
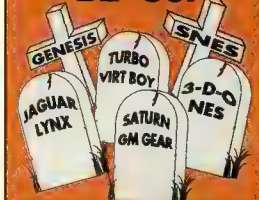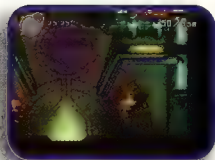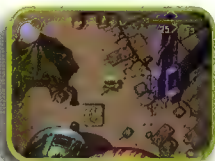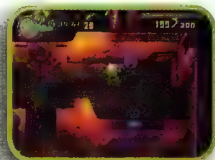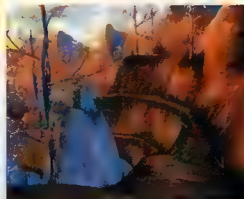
Hatching

JANUARY
2 0 0 0

the ultimate
RPG fantasy comes to life

■ These shots of developer WXP's "Dagoth Moor Zoological Garden demo" show off the company's Experience engine running on a GeForce 256 card. It is an excellent display of the chip's geometry capabilities as well as some of its flashier DirectX 7 features like cube environment mapping

■ HARDWARE REVIEW

Does GeForce really deliver?

Creative Labs and Guillemot harness Nvidia's powerful new chip

After what seemed like an eternity Nvidia's GeForce 256 has arrived. Speculated to be the driving force behind Microsoft's still-unannounced home console, X-Box, PC video cards using the GeForce technology are the most powerful we've seen to date. Each card is capable of rendering up to 15 million full-feature-enabled triangles with a fill rate of 480 megapixels per second, while taking on the entire 3D pipeline in OpenGL and D3D games written to make use of the feature. This frees up one's CPU to worry about other, less strenuous, instructions.

As we go to press, two reviewable GeForce cards have arrived: Creative's Annihilator and Guillemot's 3D Prophet. Both are AGP 4X cards (though both work in AGP 2X systems) and have 32MB of single-data rate (SDR) memory. GeForce cards using double-data rate (DDR) memory should arrive within two months, and such boards will be considerably faster in 32-bit color than their SDR-based siblings, but they could also cost as much as $100 more. Keep this information in mind when considering an upgrade to GeForce.

In terms of raw power, the Annihilator and the Prophet perform very similarly, with the Annihilator pulling slightly ahead in our benchmark scores, due largely to the fact that Creative Labs manufactured GeForce reference boards for Nvidia from the very beginning, and has therefore spent a bit more time with the technology. Given a few more driver updates, our guess is that the performance gap between the two cards will shrink considerably. And although the Annihilator is the less expensive of the two boards, it doesn't offer the TV-out capabilities of the Prophet. So, if you want to play games and watch DVD-movies on your television, the extra green you'll shell out for Guillemot's offering will be well spent. If you are a PC gamer looking for the fastest, most powerful 3D card around, your money will be well spent on either of these fine boards. **Next**Gen

All benchmarks run on PIII 450MHz-based PC. To give you a frame of reference for the GeForce numbers, we also tested the current 3D champ, a standard TNT2 Ultra. What you'll notice is that in 3DMark, a test of DirectX 6 performance, the TNT2 Ultra is actually a hair faster, but in OpenGL, the GeForce cards dominate, making GeForce the card of choice for *Quake III*. We expect D3D performance to increase with subsequent driver revisions.

TNT2 ULTRA	ANNIHILATOR:	3D PROPHET:
Quake III (32-bit color with all graphical effects set to their max)	*Quake III* (32-bit color with all graphical effects set to their max)	*Quake III* (32-bit color with all graphical effects set to their max)
640x480: 58.9	640x480: 74.5	640x480: 73.4
800x600: 45.1	800x600: 56.0	800x600: 54.7
1024x768: 30.5	1024x768: 36.0	1024x768: 35.0
1600x1200: 9.2	1600x1200: 7.8	1600x1200: 7.6
3DMark 99 MAX	3DMark 99 MAX	3DMark 99 MAX
4,560 3DMarks	800x600 (default settings)	800x600 (default settings)
Game 1 Race: 49.3	4,375 3DMarks	4,310 3DMarks
Game 2 First Person: 42.4	Game 1 Race: 47.3	Game 1 Race: 46.2
Fill rate w/ multitexturing: 230.5M Texels per second	Game 2 First Person: 40.7	Game 2 First Person: 40.4
	Fill Rate w/ multitexturing: 423.4M Texels per second	Fill Rate w/ multitexturing: 412.7 M Texels per second

Creative Labs Annihilator	Guillemot 3D Prophet
Manufacturer: **Creative Labs**	Manufacturer: **Guillemot**
Suggested Retail Price: **$249**	Suggested Retail Price: **$289**

■ TOM RUSSO'S

In the Studio
Development news as it develops

RED STORM FINDS FREEDOM

→ With *Rainbow Six* and *Rogue Spear*, Red Storm Entertainment may seem locked into Tom Clancy's brand of covert operations. But that is about to change. The company has agreed to develop a game based on the work of another well-known author, fantasy novelist Anne McCaffrey. Currently in the works is a third-person adventure game code-named "Maeve," based on McCaffrey's *Freedom* novels, about a resistance force battling aliens on a conquered Earth. Stealthy gameplay is an important part of the title — no Red Storm design surprise there. Sources indicate McCaffrey's other series of fantasy novels, *The Dragonriders of Pern*, has been licensed by Grolier. The *Freedom* game is scheduled for November 2000 release, and coincidentally, a TV show based on *Dragonriders* is set to air roughly the same time.

DREAMWORKS IN EXILE

→ DreamWorks Interactive is working on a new game, tentatively called *Exile*. The PlayStation2 title has been in development for more than six months, and insiders believe it has spawned a motion picture deal as well.

FLYING HIGH

→ Late this fall, championship BMX rider Dave Mirra got vertical, horizontal, and even inverted in his motion-capture session with Acclaim for the company's upcoming BMX game. Currently the game is unnamed, but it will arrive on PlayStation in the third quarter of 2000.

BLACK OPS GOES PS2

→ Black Ops Entertainment has been busy with *KnockOut Kings N64*, *Jurassic Park: Warpath*, and *Tomorrow Never Dies* for PlayStation. But those are done. So what's next? According to Black Ops President John Botti, the company will be working on PlayStation2 and plans to develop an original action/adventure product. Personally, we're hoping for a sequel to Black Ops' underappreciated undersea adventure, *Treasures of the Deep*.

DUKE-ING IT OUT AGAIN

→ While *Duke Nukem Forever* is finally showing signs of life on the PC, another third-person Duke game for PlayStation will likely beat it to the market. *Duke Nukem: Planet of the Babes* will be available in April, and is being developed by N-Space, which developed *Duke Nukem: Time to Kill*. Expect better graphics this time around, when Duke's mission is to save a planet of women from those aliens — only Duke.

BUILDING CHARACTER

→ In a unique move that only furthers the idea that game development will become increasingly apportioned in the future, enter Infinexus. This new Arizona-based company was founded by former Surreal Lead Animator Mel Guymon (*Drakan*) to provide custom content solutions for game developers. Infinexus has already created everything from concept characters to realtime 3D models for developers who don't have the in-house art resources. But Guymon isn't stopping there — at deadline he told NG that he is spinning-off the Infinexus business to focus on Leviathan games, a new development house with plans to develop an online-only PC game, due to release 18 months from now. Leviathan's current team includes two former Zombie team members and another former Surreal employee. Expect to hear more from this group in the future, as Guymon mentions the possibility of a future partnership.

X-BOX: THERE ARE DEVELOPERS

→ All may be quiet at Microsoft as the company plots the next move in its monopoly game. So you may be asking, is X-Box a system, or isn't it? What if we told you several top PC developers in the US and UK had already started developing games for it, well then — it would be a system, wouldn't it? No one's saying anything specific yet, but there are development geniuses out there who've mumbled a few things. Stay tuned.

RENT A HERO

A FANTASY ADVENTURE GAME

IT IS A TIME FOR HEROES

Greetings, fellow adventurer! I am Rodrigo—a professional hero for hire. Welcome to my island home—enchanting Tol Andar, nestled in the Sea of Infinity. Here you will be awed by the aerial displays of dragons, dazzled by the beauty of princesses, and inspired by the deeds of true heroes. We islanders are also keepers of an ancient magical treasure known as the Gloomstones. We have learned to use the extraordinary powers of these stones to help us in our daily lives.

But now chaos threatens our magical island. Tales of the power of the Gloomstones have traveled throughout the kingdom. Pirates and other nefarious characters are converging on Tol Andar to seize the stones.

Dark destruction threatens my enchanted home, but I will not stand idly by and watch my world torn asunder. It is time to make a stand—to finally prove myself as a true hero.

Join me in this great adventure! Together we will outwit pirates and battle dragons. Together we will journey on a quest to solve the mystery of Tol Andar.

FEATURES

* Over 100 spectacular scenes set in 37 different locations.
* Award-winning full-screen animations completely rendered in 3D.
* Over 30 individual characters to meet and interact with, plus numerous non-interactive characters.
* Breathtaking camera movement and animated lighting effects.
* Vivid character animations with life-like facial expressions.
* Inspirational soundtrack composed with the support of Werner Hink, leader of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra.
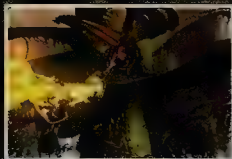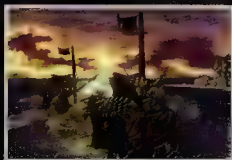
WINDOWS® 95/98 CD-ROM

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CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

Distributed by:

SOUTHPEAK
INTERACTIVE

Next Generation
celebrates anniversary

Five years ago this month, Next Generation revolutionized game-magazine coverage

➡ Normally, we at **Next Generation** pride ourselves on looking forward to the future of the game industry, but this month, having reached our five-year milestone, we decided to take a page to look back. The game industry has changed dramatically since 1995; it's now widely regarded as a mainstream entertainment form, and games are also closer than ever to being recognized as a legitimate, interactive art form.

Game magazines have changed a lot since 1995, too, and we like to think a lot of that has to do with us. Before **Next Generation** launched, most game magazines were simply hype machines for game publishers, aimed at children. Then we arrived with a smart, sophisticated magazine aimed at intelligent readers, started asking the tough questions, and cutting through the hype. The result: fairer reviews and better coverage across the board, in all magazines. Still, there's only one **Next Generation**, and while pretenders may ape our style (and sometimes borrow heavily from our old features list), just as we've led the past five years, we plan to continue to lead for a long time to come.

1995: The battle begins

TOP STORIES: Beginning the year with an overview of the nine players in the 32-bit race, we continued with in-depth cover stories on the radical new PlayStation system, a lawsuit-generating article on Jaguar, and the first word on top games like *Virtua Fighter 2*, *Wipeout*, and *Destruction Derby*.

THE QUOTES:
"Jaguar has a long life ahead of it . . . it will be a very successful product." — Sam Tramiel, Atari

"I'm ready for Sony, sure. I look forward to the battle." — Tom Kalinske, Sega

"The PlayStation is here, and it looks as if it's here to stay. You need three things to succeed in the game industry: great games, great hardware, and great marketing. Whether by skill, luck, or just deep pockets, Sony has scored three out of three" — NG 12

THE GAMES: *Wipeout, Virtua Fighter Remix, Ridge Racer, Tekken*

1996: It's *Mario's* year

TOP STORIES: The year began with Sony and Sega slugging it out as lesser players like 3DO and Jaguar slowly exited stage left, and gamers everywhere waited impatiently for *Mario* as Ultra 64 went through a name change and many delays. Mario eventually scored two covers and our pronouncement as "best videogame ever." We also scored the first (and only) interview Bill Gates ever did with a gaming magazine.

THE QUOTES:
"We don't have a strategy to do a $200 game console." — Bill Gates, Microsoft

"...in terms of 3D, 32-bit machines aren't good enough to do the job properly." — Trip Hawkins, 3DO

"If you painted things in the bleakest possible way [for Nintendo], I'd look at you and smile and say three words: *Super Mario 64*." — Howard Lincoln, Nintendo

THE GAMES: *Quake, Tomb Raider, Super Mario 64, Wave Race, Fighting Vipers*

1997: The PC takes over

TOP STORIES: As PSX solidified its lead and Saturn wilted, the 3D-accelerated PC took the games innovation lead. N64 had its own problems, which we revealed in our most controversial cover story ever; some say Nintendo still hasn't forgiven us. One thing is for sure, though: we'll never forgive ourselves for putting *Blasto!* on the cover. We also gave both sides of the videogame violence issue equal time

THE QUOTES:
"If you want to control violence, I don't think you start with videogames." — Henry Jenkins, MIT

"[My original idea for *Quake*] would have been great, but nobody else had any faith in trying it." — John Romero, Ion Storm

"I'd like to see less truly violent videogames, but the ratings have been quite responsibly applied." — Senator Joseph Lieberman, D-Conn.

THE GAMES: *GoldenEye: 007, Dark Forces II, Total Annihilation, San Francisco Rush, Final Fantasy VII, Quake II*

1998: *Zelda, Zelda, Zelda*

TOP STORIES: As PSX and N64 entered their prime, we did a massive feature on the top players in the game industry. We then got busy waiting for *Zelda* and gearing up for the next generation with Sega's oddly named "Dreamcast." We kept the controversy meter high with a take-no-prisoners interview with 989's Kelly Flock.
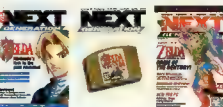
THE QUOTES:
"Nintendo expects us to produce great games, and that's what we're here for." — Chris Stamper, Rare

"Liquid AI is the crap that ran down [EA's] leg when they saw *GameDay*." — Kelly Flock, 989 Studios

"I work every day that I am near a computer. It's what I do. Programming is the major motivator in my life. It's the thing that I most enjoy . . . every day I wake up excited to go to work." — John Carmack, id Software

THE GAMES: *Zelda, Half-Life, StarCraft, Gran Turismo, Tekken 3, Metal Gear Solid, Resident Evil 2*

1999: Console wars redux

TOP STORIES: As Dreamcast picked up momentum, Sony revealed its stunning PlayStation2 technology Despite naysaying and a lack of support from key players like EA, Dreamcast managed to sell more units in 30 days than Sony, Sega, 3DO, and Atari sold in all of 1995. Microsoft's rumored X-Box added a new wrinkle to the hardware horizon, and **Next Generation**, in preparation for the next console generation, relaunched with a bold new design and a brand new logo.

THE QUOTES:

"No." — Bing Gordon, EA, on whether Dreamcast can succeed without EA's support

"What's interesting is doing something no one else is talking about yet. Without these ideas, I don't think there is any point to making a next generation of hardware." — Shigeru Miyamoto, Nintendo

"It's us, the influencers and early adopters, who will determine which machines succeed and fail in the next generation." — Editor's letter, NG 12/99

THE GAMES: *Homeworld, Soul Calibur, Tony Hawk's Pro Skateboarder, EverQuest, NFL 2K*

The Future of Blowing $#!% Up

MAXIMUM SECURITY

CHICO

Look for the Vigilante 8: 2nd Offense
High Octane Comic Book from **CHAOS!** Comics

TEEN
T
ESRB

Nintendo 64

PlayStation

Sega
Dreamcast

RESIDENT EVIL
CODE VERONICA

Darker, scarier, and more evil than ever before

■ Publisher: **Capcom** ■ Developer: **Capcom**
■ Release Date: **February 2000** ■ Origin: **Japan**

■ Stay away from the windows when you see zombies outside! Finally, Capcom has realized that a flimsy glass window may hold out the rain, but not the undead masses

Raccoon City is dead.
Umbrella Corp.'s
ungodly experiments led
to the destruction of the company's
facilities and the death of every man,
woman, and child inside the city limits.
   The lucky ones were turned into flesh-
eating zombies by the virus Umbrella
created in labs deep beneath the city. The
unlucky ones? Devoured by the lucky
ones. In the first three *Resident Evils*,
players took control of courageous heroes
such as Chris Redfield (*RE1*) and his sister
Claire (*RE2*) as they tried to stop
Umbrella's insidious plans. Stopping the
catastrophe once it began was impossible,
and players ended up barely escaping the
city with their lives.
   Despite the destruction of its Raccoon
City facility, though, Umbrella still has
strongholds throughout the world — and
it will stop at nothing to master the dark
art of genetic mutation in its quest to
create the ultimate bio-weapon. Now,
a secret war is being fought to destroy
Umbrella before another tragedy occurs.
Raccoon City may be gone, but it's only
the beginning.

The dream of (un)death

Shinji Mikami has a problem that most
developers only dream about. As the
producer of the *Resident Evil* series, he is
in the uncomfortable position of being
forced with each new product to top
a major hit. With *Resident Evil:
Code Veronica*, he's finally

■ Enough! He's dead already! Pick up two pic
at once and you can make short work out of
anything that gets in your way

■ Enter an area with both guns drawn, draw beads on two different targets, and take them out.
For every two you take out, however, there are many more just waiting to take their place

been freed from the technological restraints of PlayStation, but with that freedom comes more problems. How do you go about redefining for the next generation a genre that you helped pioneer?

It doesn't help that few titles in history have been as massively anticipated as the *Resident Evil* series on Dreamcast. Since it was announced more than a year ago, rumors have run rampant about what can be expected in the game. Excitement — especially in America, where Dreamcast has shattered all sales projections — is building to levels usually reserved for the games of Shigeru Miyamoto, but Capcom's development team in Osaka has remained silent. Until now.

So, can *Resident Evil* do for Dreamcast what it did for PlayStation?

Yes, it can. And more.

Stories of darkness

Players pick up the story where *Resident Evil 2* left off. After narrowly escaping death, Claire Redfield goes in search of her brother (Ex-STARS member Chris Redfield), who is off investigating Umbrella Corp. in Europe. Although she succeeds in sneaking into Umbrella's lab in France, she is discovered and captured, then transferred to Umbrella's secret prison facility in South America. Unfortunately for Umbrella, an explosion in the lab allows Claire to make an attempt at regaining her freedom. But where is she? And why are there zombies everywhere?

■ You'll recognize all of your old "friends" from previous *Resident Evil* games as well as several new faces of evil. The hellhounds, in particular, are so well animated it's eerie to watch

"We are very excited to offer people two very different locations to explore," says Mikami. "This will give more depth to both the story and gameplay." While Capcom is unwilling to divulge how the

game will switch between the two locations, we do know that players will be able to play the parts of both Claire and Chris in different parts of the game. Possibly, since the game is 2 GD-ROMs in size, the storyline will play out as in *Resident Evil 2*, with players completing a character on the first disk and then switching for the second.

Luckily, both characters are equally

"I think *Code Veronica* will scare people in different ways than before"

— Shinji Mikami, producer, *Resident Evil: Code Veronica*
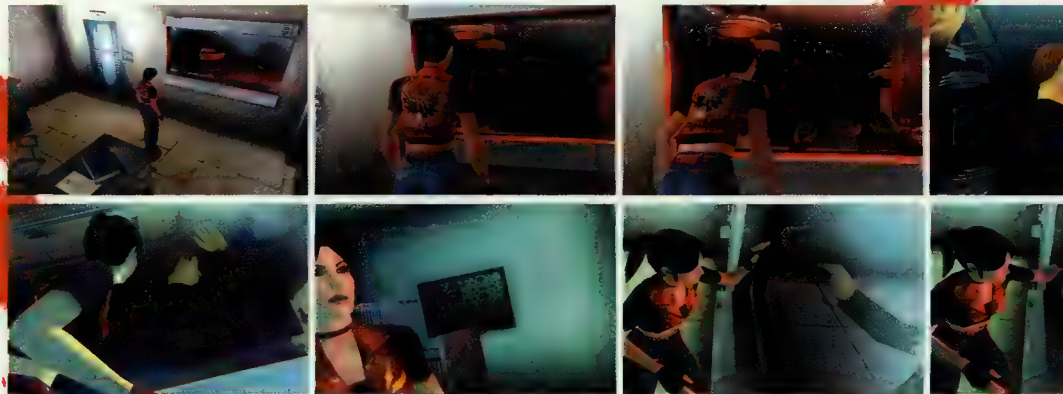
■ Gameplay seamlessly segues into cut scenes that help the storyline along. These cut scenes show how highly detailed the character models really are

■ Code Veronica has more enemies to fight than ever before so you'll always have to be on the lookout for ammo and new weapons or you won't stand a chance

CRACKING THE CODE

One of the greatest mysteries about *Resident Evil: Code Veronica* so far is the title. Just what the heck does *Code Veronica* mean, anyway? Shinji Mikami, the game's producer, shed some light on the subject when NG queried. "We cannot give you too much information on this," he said, "but a noble family called the Ashford family appears in the game. Veronica is the name of a woman who was the original head of the Ashford family." Hmmm … what does that have to do with evil corporations and deadly zombies?

compelling and functional in the heat of battle. One new feature in the game is the ability to wield two of the same weapons at one time. So not only can you double your firepower, but when you step into a room you can target more than one enemy at a time. Realistic? Maybe not, but definitely one step closer to living the dream of being a Hong-Kong-style action star.

Envisioning horror

Mikami likes to think it will be the graphics that will immediately make the game stand out. "For the first time, the entire game is at a 'pre-rendered CG movie' quality," he says. "The graphics are truly outstanding, and the textures and light sourcing will blow you away." He's right. Step into the world of *Code Veronica* and you *will* be blown away.
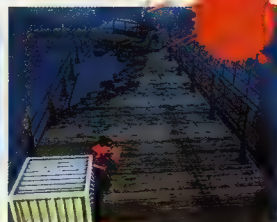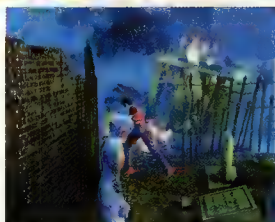
■ Some of the puzzles are much more advanced than what we're used to, but you'll still find remnants of the old game designs, like this puzzle where you must push several boxes together

Using the power of Dreamcast and a little technological help from Sega of Japan, the environments are more believable and more frightening than ever before, with all sorts of hidden evil lurking deep in the shadows, just waiting for the slightest misstep. Besides the high resolution and 60fps framerate, the

environments also manage to look as detailed as in the previous games, despite the fact that they are all now rendered in realtime. "The game is close to *Resident Evil* since it is a sequel," Mikami confides, "but at the same time, it is close to *Dino Crisis* [a game Mikami also produced] since it is a fully 3D game. I truly believe
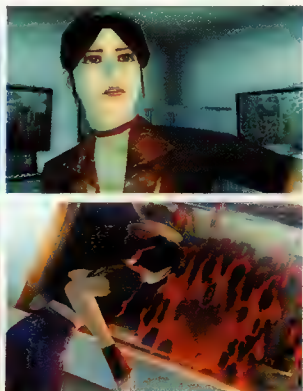
■ This worker is trapped in one of the experiment labs, but unfortunately he isn't alone. Check out Claire's expressions as she realizes what is happening

■ You also get to play as Claire's brother Chris later in the game. Presumably, he will have his own half of the adventure that will cross over with Claire's

■ Just when you think it's safe, this bad boy jumps through the window and it becomes a desperate fight for survival. Whatever you do, don't let him grab you or he'll crush your head like a ripe melon (above). Ouch, and he's not even a boss character

what kind of 'scary moment' you wish to convey. I think *Code Veronica* will scare people in different ways than before."

Playing with the lights on

One thing that has been done to up the tension yet another notch is integrating realtime cinemas directly into the action. No longer do we have to put up with character models just waving their hands either — this is true cinema. With the high-poly models used for characters, you can now tell what they are thinking by watching their facial expressions. In one scene, Claire reaches out in distress to a man trapped in a lab only to recoil in horror as he is brutally grabbed from behind by an unseen captor and smashed open on the Plexiglas window. As she steps back, horrified, the camera backs away a bit and you are right back in the game. "With Dreamcast, it is easier to apply motion-capture data to the game's character animation," stresses Mikami when asked why the characters move so much more fluidly in the game. "It also allows us to process the

that I have successfully combined the best parts of both titles to create the greatest thriller to date."

As in *Dino Crisis*, the 3D environments also have the great side benefit of enabling some camerawork to be used for dramatic effect. So while you will still get some moments with a static camera, it is always intelligently placed enough to drop behind you when you run down an alley or zoom in for a dramatic moment. Due to this new camera, however, Mikami and crew had to re-think how they were going to keep players on the edge of their seats. "Sometimes it's harder, sometimes it's easier," he says. "It really depends on
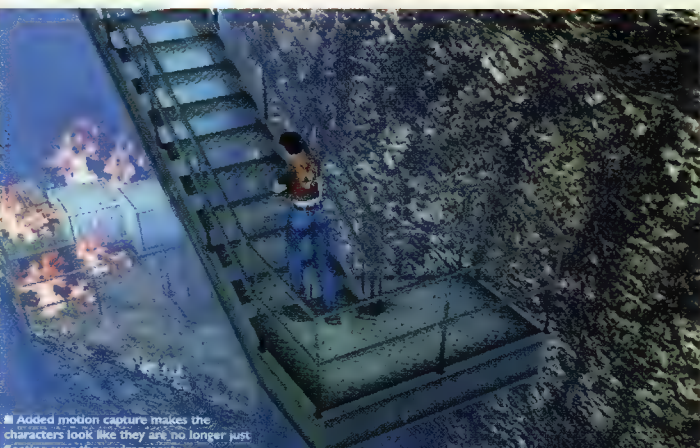
> ## "Our goal's to add as much reality into the game as possible, and Dreamcast brings us closer to this"
> — Shinji Mikami

■ Added motion capture makes the characters look like they are no longer just floating over the environments
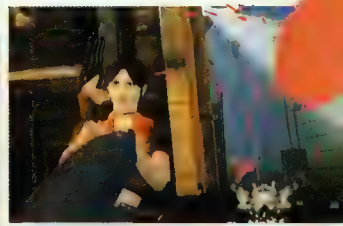
■ Sometimes, no matter how much you want to fight, it's better to run away. Smart players will know when to stand and fight, and when there isn't any hope other than to flee

additional polygons necessary for the facial animations." The result? A much more personal brand of terror, since you can now see exactly how the events of the game are affecting your character.

Another aspect that the team has focused on is the sound for the game. "Our goal is to add as much reality into the game as possible, and Dreamcast brings us even closer to achieving this," says Mikami. "Dreamcast's added audio capabilities have enabled us to produce several high-quality sound effects at one time. For example, it is possible to have the sound of rain, a human voice talking, and the siren of a police car at the same time. Not only can you do all these things at the same time, but the sound quality is very high. High enough, in fact, that the sound of thunder crashing through the windows may make you want to play with the lights on — and the moan of an unseen zombie will make the hairs on the back of your neck prickle up.

Will *Code Veronica* be another runaway hit for Capcom? With its

darker feel, advanced technology, and tight gameplay, all signs currently point to "yes." In fact, with the delays *Shenmue* has been facing (currently a spring 2000 release), this could be the kick that really pushes Dreamcast in the Japanese market prior to the release of PlayStation 2. In the meantime, Mikami knows that he must constantly keep forging new

ground if the license is going to continue to prosper. "We're always looking to push the threshold on every aspect of the product."

Mikami then looks up and deadpans, "You'll have to play and let me know how many nights you stayed awake." Sleep be damned — we look forward to those nights.
                                        — *Blake Fischer*

■ The new lighting effects in the game are absolutely spectacular and create a much deeper mood than ever before
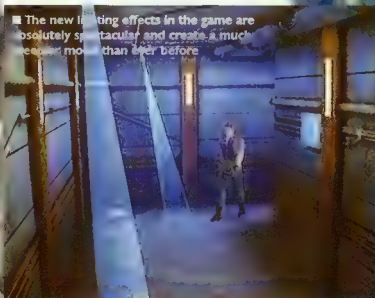
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of titles, up to date and to the point

■ DREAMCAST

NHL 2K

■ Publisher: **Sega** ■ Developer: **Black Box** ■ Release Date: **February 2000** ■ Origin: **Canada**

Can Black Box's hockey game make the all-star lineup along with *NFL 2K* and *NBA 2K*?

■ After every period, the ice has a very smooth, glassy quality, and is very reflective. Skates will leave persistent trails in the ice, and the ice will get more scuffed over the course of the period. As you would expect, the ice is cleaned between periods. "We're not just drawing trails behind the players," says Tronsgard, "the skates actually create the trails in the ice."

When **Next Generation** visited Vancouver, Canada, the city's hometown pro hockey team known as "the Canucks" was leading the Northwest division by two points. But we were there to see Vancouver's other leading hockey team — Black Box, which has entered the figurative third period in development on *NHL 2K*.

If you've had one or two serious play sessions with either *NFL 2K* and *NBA 2K*, sitting down to *NHL 2K* on Dreamcast is as you might expect it to be. The top-down gameplay camera is a familiar one, and the framerate is sharp (although not locked at 60fps, yet.) The players move with the grace of 1,000 motion-captured moves, which is coincidentally currently the number of animations implemented. Each player is a well-detailed model composed of 1,400 polygons, and each player's face has been modeled to match his real-world counterpart.

"This is really the first console game," says Black Box Producer Doug Tronsgard, "where you'll be able to look at the guy and go, 'Hey, that's Lindros.'"

To keep these players animating realistically, Black Box motion-captured skaters of three different sizes over 11 days. During a three-day session on rollerblades and eight more days on the ice, different goalie styles were also

■ Fighting has never been as realistic as it is in *NHL 2K*: all the fisticuffs have been motion captured, so when you give Nedved a good drubbing, he'll definitely feel it

■ Subtle animations include hopping over downed players and reaching for a behind-the-back pass. But the particle-system skate spray is especially nice

captured — the goalie even sustained a concussion during the action.

As one might suspect after seeing *NFL 2K* and *NBA 2K*, *NHL 2K* also brings the same "TV-style" camera cut-aways to the game found in a real hockey broadcast.

"Whenever the puck stops," says Designer Clint Forward, "we want to have the camera cut to, say, the guy that just scored the goal, show his face, let the announcers talk about him. Then maybe cut to the crowd or to the coaches. Let's look at the opposing coach getting mad, or the other coach congratulating one of the players."

During a penalty in the game **Next Generation** is playing, the camera switches to a shot of a player as he skates his way over to the penalty box raising his arm as if in protest. Or, in a remarkably life-emulating moment, the camera zooms in on two players staring

each other down, and then, boom, they drop their gloves. The game then proceeds to let you and your opponent fight it out hockey-style. **NG**'s first fight on the ice was against a rookie web-site journalist, who was mercilessly pounded to his knees after we grabbed hold of his sweater and hammered him repeatedly with right crosses.

Animating realtime facial damage that may be sustained during a fight is on the B-list of features the company is planning to implement, as well as other realtime facial expressions. Currently the team is focused on implementing gameplay features such as icon passing, tuning the

AI and animations, and adding the sound effects and play-by-play.

Expect a high-quality sound experience as well. The team has secured the voice of Hockey Night in Canada Hall-of-Famer Bob Cole, who's been calling hockey action for 27 years. Together with color commentator Harry Neil, the two recorded 13,000 sound clips for use in play-by-play. There are 17,000 total sounds in the game, including ambient noise and a separate rink announcer.

> "This is really the first console game where you'll be able to look at the guy and go, 'Hey, that's Lindros'"
> — Black Box Producer **Doug Tronsgard**

■ "We did three different versions of goaltender's saves," says Art Director Emmanuel Soupidis. "Stand-up style, like Sean Burke or Kirk McLean; more of a butterfly style, like Curtis Joseph or Patrick Roy; and a third style, which is more of a Dominik Hasek or Grant Fuhr, all over the place, do-what-you-can-to-stop-it"

DAL	0
BUF	0
1st	4.41
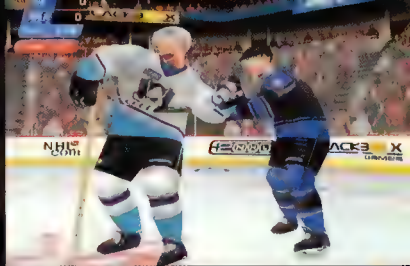
■ Landing a big hit is one thing, but if you're caught hooking, you'll find your man arguing from inside the box of shame

Black Box started *NHL 2K* from scratch last winter, and it's been a race against the clock to implement every feature by the ship date, and it is incredible the team has accomplished as much as it has. ("Visual Concepts had two years to work on football and basketball," says one Black Box employee. "We're getting barely more than one.") Although the name Black Box may be new to you, 13 members of the 21-person development team are former Radical Entertainment employees, and many of them worked on the fantastic *NHL Powerplay* series for PlayStation and Saturn. During the re-structuring of Radical (after Radical's deal with Disney/ESPN fell apart), the founding 12 members of Black Box opted to leave and form their own group, forfeiting their positions within Radical before any further layoffs in hopes that others might keep their jobs.

The team's experience is evident in everything from the particle system that generates the spray of ice carved from a player's skate to the glass reflection of two players as they tussle for a puck along the boards. From what they've managed thus far, it would be hard to argue that anyone other than this team of hockey veterans could put together such a comprehensive next-generation title in so short a period of time. At one point in the demo, Tronsgard zooms the camera in tight on the puck, so close you can read the "Made in Canada" label. The irony wasn't lost on us.   *—Tom Russo*

SEEMS LIKE OLD TIMES

Remember *Ice Hockey* for NES? We do. The game featured three sizes of characters — the fast, skinny guy, the fat guy who could hit hard but skated slow, and the medium-sized guy who was a well-rounded player. Well, in order to keep players animating realistically in *NHL 2K*, Black Box motion-captured skaters of three sizes. Coincidentally, one was a player of average height and weight, another was "a bigger guy," says Art Director Emmanuel Soupidis, "who had a totally different skating style," and the third? "A skater who was a little smaller but very quick on his feet." Technology may change, but the game remains the same.

■ When zoomed in, the replay camera reveals just how detailed everything is, including the puck. But from gameplay perspective, it all comes back to the overhead camera

■ The game features 28 different arenas, with a sprite-based, animated crowd. Most are the actual rinks with all the proper signage. However some stingy arena owners, such as the owner of Boston's Fleet Center (note: Fleet is a bank) are looking for licensing fees to use arena likenesses. Hey Ebenezer Fleet, it's not about your arena, it's about the game. Our advice: Spite Fleet and put in the Garden!

Pictures of stock photos will be intermixed
with the design of the capitol city
by Elixir's artists

■ **PC**

REPUBLIC

■ Publisher: **Eidos** ■ Developer: **Elixir** ■ Release Date: **TBA** ■ Origin: **UK**

Fancy world domination? Start with Novistrana

■ Black helicopters descend on the capitol city as a coup attempt is consummated

→ Twelve months after he left Peter Molyneux's Lionhead studios, the cat is out of the bag: Demis Hassabis is working on what may be the most ambitious virtual world ever. To demonstrate, Hassabis shows a tech demo with row upon row of incredibly detailed buildings, stretching out to the horizon. "We've got 10,000 of those buildings lined up and that's billions of polys onscreen, because each building is ten million polys. But just to prove we aren't cheating, we can zoom in on any one," he adds, before closing on a randomly chosen balcony. Each of the railings is built with polygons, even down to the individual scrolls and curves of the wrought-iron work.

"I call it fabric and fiber," he says. "We have this hugely detailed fabric, but you can take a microscope to any part and see the fibers. To give you an example of
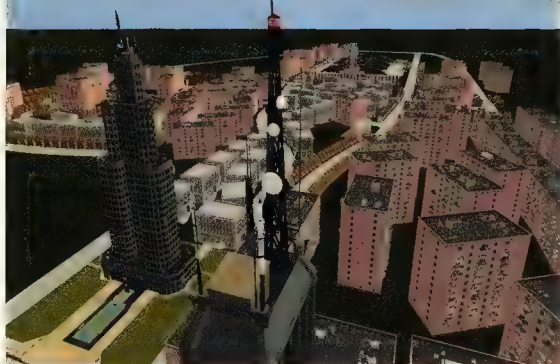
■ This sequence of pictures shows a row of Soviet-style apartment blocks. The camera zooms in from top to bottom to reveal a perfect polygonal flower pot. Although this is just a tech demo, it gives a flavor of how most of the cities may look in the post-Soviet "republic" of Novistrana
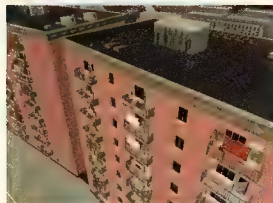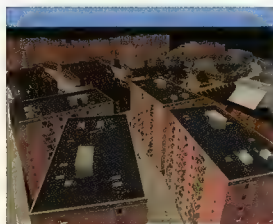
how hard this was, *Sim City 3000* looks exactly like *Sim City 2000* but it took three-and-a-half years to make. The reason was, for two years Maxis was trying to make an engine that could show a city in full 3D. They basically gave up and said it was technically impossible. We managed to do it in four months." While the game isn't yet playable, the core engine behind it is highly impressive. Elixir expects to get enough components ready to make *Republic* playable by January, but until then it is concentrating on maxing out the technology base.

Gameplay should be straightforward: Hassabis says the inspiration for *Republic* came from a little-known board game called *Junta*. Based in a banana republic, the goal is to make as much money as

possible by becoming the president. Essentially, it's a game about the pursuit of power.

Set in the fictional former Soviet republic of Novistrana, a 2,000-square-kilometer area, players start out in a randomly selected small town, then build up their base until they gain control of a local city. From there they start to consolidate influence until they move to the capital to take on the president. Hassabis estimates it will take around 10 hours to get enough power to make that jump. However, there are many obstacles in the way, not the least of which are the 16 other factions also out to take over the country. Of course, the president will be attempting to hang on to power himself, too. Controlled either by other players or AI opponents (the president is always AI-controlled), these factions will exert their influence over the 50 cities scattered throughout Novistrana.

The AI that controls the million people that populate the country is currently running on a 2D testbed to demo advanced path-finding techniques: the citizens can intelligently move through the city, avoiding traffic and other pedestrians, using the Metro, posting letters, and naturally finding their way to their destinations. One interesting scenario displayed was the intervention of the police force in a riot. Although the forces were only represented by colored triangles, the results were startlingly naturalistic. As the rioters fanned out, trying to escape, small-scale encounters developed. Some

The *Republic* team is working on what may be the most ambitious virtual world ever attempted

■ Influencing the man in the street is key for some strategies, but unimportant if you seek to achieve power through crime

■ Will you end up with a bullet in your brain at the secret police HQ or with a plaza dedicated in your honor? The choice is yours

rioters escaped scot-free while one unlucky character ended up with six policemen on his tail.

To keep the game controls as straightforward as possible, everything that occurs in *Republic* is organized using one mechanism and one resource. The mechanism is character-controlled actions; the resource is influence. "As a faction leader, you don't actually do things yourself — it's not an

RTS," explains Hassabis. "But at the start of the game you have one key character, your Peter Mandelson figure. He's your right-hand man." Beyond that, you have to recruit new characters that will allow you to order additional actions. For example, with a union leader and a rabblerouser under your command, the ability to organize a rally becomes available.

While the game is designed to be entirely open-ended, it is being made with five specific "career paths" in mind: political, religious, military, criminal, and business, with each path possessing inherent advantages. Playing religiously, your key characters will be very loyal in obeying all your commands, whereas criminal-based groups will be less loyal but possess more money with which they can buy influence. However, there won't be any choice of playing style per se — it will all be implicit in the game design.

Although his team has worked diligently to design the gameplay at the same time as the technology, Hassabis admits that balancing as ambitious a project as *Republic* will take most of next year. If team Elixir can pull it off, however, he may find that *Theme Park World*'s 3.5 million copies were just the beginning.   — *Nigel Edge*

■ DREAMCAST

ETERNAL ARCADIA

■ Publisher: **Sega** ■ Developer: **Sega** ■ Release Date: **Spring (Japan)** ■ Origin: **Japan**

Swashbuckling pirates rule the skies — care to join them?

■ Exploration is encouraged. Who knows what wonders you will find as you search out uncharted regions of the skyscape

PHANTASY STAR

No RPG name enflames the hearts of Sega fans so much as *Phantasy Star*. Starting on Master System and spawning several sequels on Genesis, the series is revered for its ingenuity as well as sheer size (later games covered several generations of characters). Originally, due to its lineage, *Eternal Arcadia* was thought to be Sega's revival of the series on Dreamcast. Truth is stranger than fiction, however, as Yuji Naka and Sonic Team have secretly been working on the next in the series — *Phantasy Star Online* — for release sometime in late 2000.

■ Combat can take place either ship-to-ship or at a more personal level. At some points in the game, you may have to even fight against an enemy armada

Once the excitement of those first-generation beat-'em-ups and racing games subsides, every platform needs its classic RPG series to survive. *Final Fantasy*, *Suikoden*, and *Wild Arms* have all done immeasurable good for PlayStation, just as *Final Fantasy*, *Secret of Mana*, and *Chrono Trigger* once kept SNES buoyant. With the RPG, the classical elements of story and characters, rather than visuals, serve to attract fanatics. If Sega can set the foundations of an epic series now, it could have many thousands of sword-and-sorcery fans on board — no matter how PS2 performs.

As may well be the thinking behind *Eternal Arcadia*. Produced by Rieko Kodama, who previously worked on *Phantasy Star* (and who was a designer on the first *Sonic* title), *Eternal Arcadia* is billed as a truly epic roleplaying adventure set in a mythical realm of floating islands and inhabitable clouds. The game, which revolves around a buccaneer explorer named Vyse, is

■ Once you hook onto an pirate ship, you can grab onto the rope and swing down to engage the enemy pirate crew

■ Vyse is a member of the Blue Sky Pirates. Much like Robin Hood, they prefer to attack the strong and protect the weak and helpless

essentially a reworking of all those old stories of pirates and hidden treasures, but here the boats fly and the ocean is a totally 3D skyscape.

It's a pretty astute set-up. Flying ships have a firm place in Japanese RPG tradition, while the Columbus era of discovery — which the plot allegedly mimics — is rife with possibilities. However, while it is known that Vyse is a "pirate" who must do battle with bad pirates as he explores the skies for new lands, little else is known about the story. Sega is, characteristically, keeping its cards close to its treasure chest.

One thing about the project is clear, though: it is massively ambitious. It may even be an attempt to redefine the RPG for a whole new age. Consequently, the designers claim not to have been influenced by any other RPG titles (although, naturally, they have played them all), as what they are attempting to do is create an innovative new game system — one, more importantly, that can be picked up by newcomers to the genre. Kodama is looking for fresh perspectives on this most esoteric of gaming styles. She's looking for the next Final Fantasy.

As for gameplay, while Eternal Arcadia is not a free-roaming multi-scenario RPG, the designers don't want players to feel hemmed in by an obviously linear narrative. One of the team's key aims is to create a game in which players can express their feelings through the main characters, rather than simply move them around like mindless automatons. Kodama and her team want this to be a bright, vibrant world — a world of possibilities rather than instructions. Ships are thus piloted in realtime, with players moving from island to island as they see fit.

Battle, of course, is intrinsic to the genre, and it's not being sidelined here. The team is planning some massive

encounters, not just between individual characters, but between boats and even armadas, recreating the epic encounters the literary genre of swashbuckling is famous for. It will also be possible to use magic and special attacks in the game, both of which are set to be accompanied by the usual cast of glossy effects.

Eternal Arcadia certainly has its sights set on grandiose achievements. The map is gargantuan, the sky can be navigated in true 3D, and the designers are even considering some sort of modem support — multiplayer roleplaying a la Ultima Online? It's possible. With this and Shenmue on the horizon, the possibilities are starting to reach beyond all known parameters. For RPG fanatics, this is the time to be alive.   — Nigel Edge
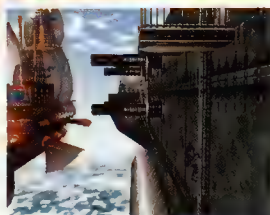
If Sega can set the foundations of an epic series now, it could have thousands of fans on board — no matter how PS2 performs

■ The special effects in Eternal Arcadia are nothing short of spectacular; and, as this boss character is about to find out, usually herald the use of some powerful magic or combat move

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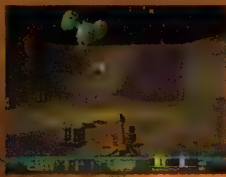
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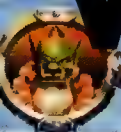
■ PC

WARCRAFT III

■ Publisher: **Blizzard** ■ Developer: **Blizzard** ■ Release Date: **Late 2000** ■ Origin: **US**

And you thought *WarCraft Adventures* was dead

■ The move to 3D allows some fairly spectacular units to enter the fray, like this gigantic Frost Wyrm

→ "When you say 'realtime strategy,' people think of lots of base management, lots of resoursce management, and throwing a lot of armies at each other," says Rob Pardo, the producer of Blizzard's *WarCraft III*. "We're trying to get away from that." So it's hardly surprising that what's on the screen in front of him doesn't look at all like a realtime strategy game. In fact, it looks like a *Diablo* clone in a 3D engine.

"We want to emphasize tactical combat, in really interesting worlds, without fodder units," he explains, "so we brought in a lot of role-playing elements." More than once, Pardo points to N64's *Legend of Zelda* and the latest *Final Fantasy* games to explain the effect they're trying to achieve. Blizzard has been showing off an early build of the game; actually, it's little more than a heavily scripted press demo, a canned jaunt through an orc town, a human encampment, a spider temple, and a bone dragon lair. It's a nice showcase for their new 3D engine (which boasts some incredibly detailed trees that are all the more surprising considering the game will run in software on a P200), but it makes it clear that this is dramatically different from earlier *WarCraft* titles.

■ Despite the new focus on heroes, you can still arrange to use some of the old tactics like this grunt rush

■ Most of the units in *WarCraft III* will be immediately familiar to veteran users, and great care has been kept in keeping the look consistent despite the fact that they are all now polygonal instead of sprite-based

Gameplay centers around heroes, who can recruit a number of followers based on their leadership skill. A player will eventually control several parties: "You'll probably get up to four heroes at a time, each with their own subgroup," says Pardo. Since the camera is always attached to a hero and it's limited to what the hero can see, *WarCraft III* has an intimate feel. But Pardo insists it will have the trappings of a realtime strategy game. "We still want you to have this fast-paced gameplay with two- or three-pronged attacks," he says. Waypoints, formations, and minimaps? "Yeah, I think

■ Despite the luscious look and feel of these screenshots, Blizzard has also made sure that players with older machines can play too, with a hefty software mode that can run on a P200

you'll see a lot of those elements."

The resource management feels more like an RPG, since gold and hero experience will be the measure of your power. Heroes go up levels and acquire skills, while gold is used to improve the keep that gives you followers and to

research their special abilities. For instance, the orc grunt can learn a berserker mode, the troll hunter will be able to track creatures by their heat signatures, and the wolf riders will snare enemies in their nets. At first, you'll get gold by killing creatures, but Pardo explains how "a more interesting way of showing resourcing" will kick in: "As you transition to the middle or later parts of the game, you want to spend your time questing or killing your opponent, so you'll be building self-contained resource nodes that give you money." Docks and lumber mills can be built to generate an income.

"We're going to make this game really customizable," says Pardo, after noting *Quake*'s incredible longevity from third-party modifications like *Team Fortress.* "Almost everything we're doing as far as art and code formats is non-proprietary. We're actually exposing a scripting system, a java-like language for people to script their own units, spells, and encounter areas, their own races, virtually their own game with their own rules." As if *WarCraft III* didn't have enough of an identity crisis without people digging their fingers into its code.   — Tom Chick

> ## "When you say 'realtime strategy,' people think of lots of base management, lots of resource management, and throwing a lot of armies at each other. We're trying to get away from that."
> — Rob Pardo, producer of *WarCraft III*

■ New to the *WarCraft* series are the rolling hills, which will not affect visibility, [...] advantage to the [...] that he [...] the high ground

THE CASE FOR *WARCRAFT III*'S TITLE

Why it should be called *Diablo III*:
1. Emphasis on exploration and hero development
2. Different classes of heroes
3. Heroes gain experience to go up levels and get new abilities
4. Your sole resource is gold, which you use to buy things
5. Combat is tactical-level hand-to-hand fighting and spell casting
6. You go on quests to gain magic items and advance the storyline

Why it should be called Warcraft III:
1. It's got orcs

The verdict:
Who cares, it's Blizzard. They could call it *Trespasser II* and not only would it sell 500,000 copies, but it would be good.

The camera is flexible so you can fight monsters from a *Diablo*-esque overhead perspective or get up-close and personal with this over-the-shoulder view
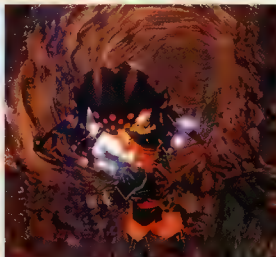
There are more than 50 types of monsters that you will fight ranging from enemy soldiers to demonic creatures

■ PC, DREAMCAST

LEGEND OF THE BLADE MASTERS

■ Publisher: **Ripcord** ■ Developer: **Ronin Entertainment** ■ Release Date: **March 2000** ■ Origin: **US**

Classic RPG style. Modern RPG technology

If you're going to mention other games as inspiration, you might as well use the best. Ronin President Kalani Streicher admits that with *Legend of the Blade Masters* "our goal was to get the look and magic effects of *Zelda* and the gameplay and interaction of *Diablo*." Two very popular and distinctly different games, but *Legend* actually looks to be a successful hybrid yielding a unique and compelling experience.

As Eric Valdimar, you play a young adventurer who stumbles across one of the five magical Dragon swords — weapons with the spirits of guardian dragons entombed within — who takes it upon himself to find the remaining four swords and rid the lands of the malignant evil that has crept in since the dragons were captured. Along the way, other adventurers will join up with your party, providing some extra firepower as well as new abilities. As Eric and friends traverse the gigantic game world, they will be confronted with dozens of quests — and, as in any well designed RPG, any single quest may consist of several subquests. Completing these will allow players to figure out the deep backstory laid out for the land, as well as provide clues and items necessary to complete the quest.

Combat is also an integral part of the game. Characters have both close and ranged weapon attacks (watching players fire arrows into monsters to have them stick for the whole battle is a nice touch), and each possesses a certain range of magic abilities. There are more than 100 unique spells in the game, and, while each character is capable of casting magic, they all have unique spells. Effects

seen in the early build previewed shied away from the traditional flash and sparkle found in most RPGs and included such crowd pleasers as a set of monstrous hands that come out of the earth to grapple your enemies to the ground and an unyielding stone golem who smashes through everything in his path.

The backbone of all these effects is fully 3D engine that allows users to play from a wealth of different camera views depending on the situation. If you place the camera high, you can strategically place your characters in optimum positions for battle against the chaotic hordes. Place the camera down low behind your characters, and you can adventure from an almost *Zelda*-like perspective. Either way, the little details like fireflies that buzz angrily around at night, or the toadstools which grow in the

■ Spell effects range from the mundane to the spectacular. One spell summons these giant hands from the earth to do your bidding

forest (only to be eaten by the fauna) instill a sense of wonder as you explore further and further into the living world.

Multiplayer presents players with its own unique set of possibilities. "We've made the multiplayer much more like *Gauntlet Legends*," says Streicher, and in that tradition, each player will be able to
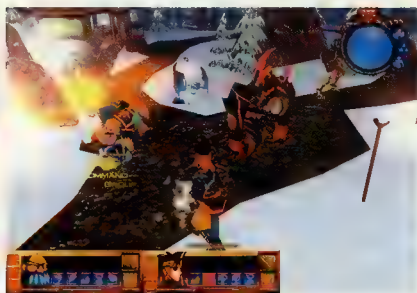
■ Since combat is in realtime, you will have to issue orders to some of your party members so that they can help you carry out an effective battle strategy

pick one of the five main characters from the game and fight their way through single-quest scenarios as a group. As players progress, tactics will no doubt evolve based on the differentiating abilities of each character, which is sure to lead to some interesting game scenarios.

One thing is for certain: with Dreamcast lacking in both multiplayer games and action/RPGs, *Legend of the Blade Masters* could make quite an impact when it ships in March.   — *Blake Fischer*

> ## Effects include such crowd pleasers as a set of monstrous hands that come out of the earth to grapple your enemies

■ If the tide of battle turns against you, it's best to start using some of your offensive spells to blast away at the enemy
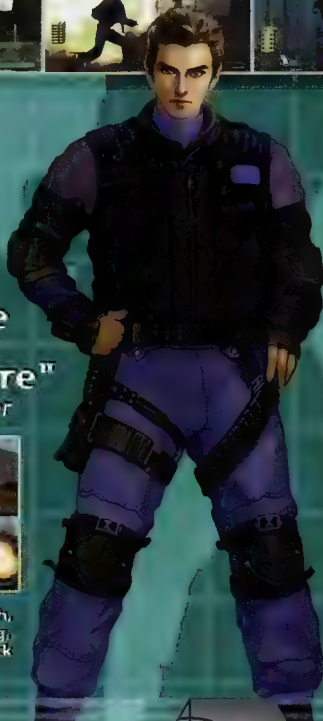
X beyond the frontier

your ultimate mission...get home alive
a space combat action game

we are told that space

is the final frontier

now you'll need to take a step

beyond...

X · BEYOND THE FRONTIER COMBINES THE INTENSE LONGEVITY OF THE RENOWNED ELITE SERIES WITH THE SPECTACULAR TECHNOLOGY OF TODAY'S CONTEMPORARY GAMING. STUNNING 3D ENVIRONMENTS, EPIC BATTLES, DIPLOMACY, CONSTRUCTION, EXPLORATION AND TRADING COMBINE TO CREATE ONE OF THE LARGEST GAMES EVER.

YOU ARE THE PILOT OF AN EXPERIMENTAL CRAFT THAT ACCIDENTALLY DROPS YOU INTO AN UNKNOWN SECTOR OF THE UNIVERSE. YOUR MISSION IS SIMPLE— GET HOME ALIVE. ALONG THE WAY YOU'LL ENCOUNTER DIFFERENT CIVILIZATIONS AND EXPERIENCE THEIR UNIQUE CUSTOMS. BUT BE AWARE, DIPLOMACY IS NOT ALWAYS THE ANSWER; CO-OPERATING WITH ONE RACE COULD EASILY MAKE YOU THE DEADLY ENEMY OF ANOTHER.
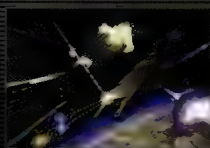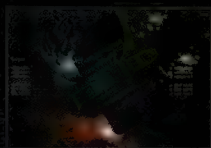
EVENTUALLY, EVEN THE ELITE FIND THEIR MATCH

■ One of the newest worlds is made entirely of ice, so you can expect plenty of cold-weather beasts to make your life tough

GAUNTLET: DARK LEGACY

■ Publisher: **Midway** ■ Developer: **Atari** ■ Release Date: **Spring 2000** ■ Origin: **US**

A new, darker, legend is born

■ The new character designs are much darker than the originals. Each character will also look different depending on which color you choose

The success of *Gauntlet Legends* is, well, the stuff of legend. When faced with the daunting task of updating this arcade (and home) hit, Atari — now a development arm of Midway Games — decided to take a new approach to the traditional series. By adding a layer of *noir*, goosing up the weirdness quotient, doubling the settings, and quadrupling the cast of characters, the latest edition of this sword-and-sorcery epic sheds its earlier mainstream flavor and picks up a distinctively contemporary, edgy tone.

"Our intention was to give *Legacy* a darker feeling, hence the name," explains Art Director Steve "Scat" Caterson. "The

1999 version, *Gauntlet Legends*, featured all the standard characters — the warrior, Valkyrie, wizard, and archer," he adds, "but we gave them a pretty vanilla flavor last year since we didn't want to

alienate anyone. This time around, we've spiced up the cast with unique, cool characters like a twisted jester or a highly stylized knight."

One thing that hasn't changed is your
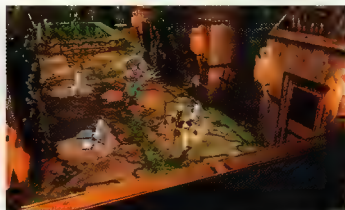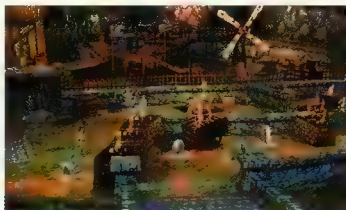
■ The game uses the same hardware, but the second-generation engine allows for an unprecedented amount of detail

→ Alphas

RUNNING THE GAUNTLET

The name *Gauntlet* is actually more appropriate than you may think. The phrase *running the gauntlet* refers to the practice of running down a path while men on either sides beat you with sticks. In *Gauntlet*, you get beat with a lot of sticks, so we're going to dispel the rumor here and now that you're looking for the piece of armor known as the gauntlet.

mission, which has been remained consistent from the 1985 version of the game up through the last 1999 remake. Once again, four heroes set out to liberate four kingdoms from an intimidating menagerie of mythic beasts, bosses, monsters, and demons. This time around, however, depth and complexity have increased exponentially. So while you'll see all the original environments from *Legends* again, you'll be forced to discover alternate paths through these newly-darkened settings. Thanks to an added layer of animation, you'll also confront twice as many interactive elements and challenges as you battle your way through the fiery lava caverns of the Mountain realm, the misty crypts of the Pyramid's tombs, or the lush swamplands of the Forest world.

For our money, the real fun starts when you arrive in the five new realms — Town World, Sky World, Ice World, Dream World, and Battlefield World — each of which offers three or four subworlds to conquer. Compelling oddities include the Town World's farmland setting, which is populated by undead zombies, "grunts," and "ground critters" (in this case, maggots that emerge from dead cows).
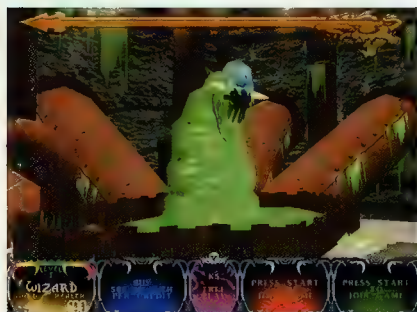
■ This graveyard is the spawning point for many undead horrors. The Dream World is filled with plenty of places like this from your nightmares

One highly imaginative environment is inspired by M.C. Escher's mindbendingly surrealistic art

Once you enter the Dream World, your last link to everyday reality goes right out the window. The unsettling trip through the land of dreams features a haunted house and a twisted carnival. The climax of the world occurs on the "M.C. Escher level," a highly imaginative environment inspired by Escher's mindbendingly surrealistic art. Watch out for sudden, shocking shifts of perspective — one minute you're walking on walls instead of the floor, forcing you to cope with unsettling perspectives and spacial relationships. You'll also find paths that flip over to reveal their physical opposites at the touch of a hidden switch, and possibly even some

disorienting challenges inspired by famous icons like Escher's endless-loop circular stairway.

The cast menu for each main character is subdivided by color (red, blue, green, yellow) with each color having a different texture and appearance, but the same basic powers, for each character. In addition to the returning cast of characters including the warrior, the wizard, the elf, and the Valkyrie, players can also choose the dwarf, the knight, the jester, and the sorceress — all of whom are also multiplied into four color suites. It looks as if the team has indeed gone way beyond *Gauntlet Legends'* vanilla; *Dark Legacy* offers an intriguingly strange mocha brew. — *Marcus Webb*

■ This disgusting plague slime boss is the final hurdle you must face in the Town World

■ This installment of *Gauntlet* evidently takes some influence from the 16-bit platformer. Look, a mine-cart level! And an ice level!

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Rheon presents the only hope for humanity against the machines that want to wipe us from the face of the Earth

Galerians isn't so much focused on horror as suspense. Still, the game manages to make use of some fairly graphic imagery when it wants to make a point

GALERIANS

■ Publisher: **Crave** ■ Developer: **Polygon Magic** ■ Release Date: **March 2000** ■ Origin: **UK**

Taking the phrase "off with his head" to new levels

Mercilessly gaze upon your enemy as he crumples to the floor burning. While this may bring satisfaction to you, it also brings you another step closer to death in the karmic cycle of the game

Crave has an uphill battle to fight. With the US release of its upcoming *Galerians*, the company must convince an already skeptical US audience that, even though the game features pre-rendered backgrounds and 3D characters, it isn't just another *Resident Evil* knockoff. Fortunately, in this case it's true. *Galerians* looks to be the game that breaks the survival horror mold — instead of taking players into a world of horror, it transports them to a stark future with nothing less than the survival of the human race at stake.

According to game designer Hiroshi "Punk" Kobayashi, the game draws its imagery from a distinguished list of stylized classics. "We drew inspiration from movies like *Blade Runner*, *12 Monkeys*, and *The Crow*," he admits, "although we did start working on the game right after *BioHazard* shipped, so we obviously drew some inspiration there too." The story line follows a young boy named Rheon, who awakens in a darkened lab sometime in the vague future. This future, however, has its share of problems. Namely, a sentient supercomputer called Dorothy has created a new race of artificial humans called "Galerians" and is now attempting to wipe out the human race and replace it with her own handiwork.

You, as Rheon, are the key. The creators of Dorothy knew that it might get too powerful, so they created a fail-safe. Rheon holds half of this fail-safe (a computer virus) deep in his mind; throughout the game, he must find the other half. What distinguishes this from your standard adventure game is that Rheon is far from helpless. At his disposal is a set of psychic powers that can be used to take out anyone who gets in his path. You can make enemies burst into flame, fly across the room, or even have their heads explode *Scanners*-style.

"The violence is necessary for the story," says Kobayashi when confronted by the sheer horror of the visual imagery. There is a balance, however; for every time that Rheon uses his powers to kill, he damages himself. "We wanted to show that there is some sort of backlash for killing others," he says, "so killing everything else is the same as killing yourself." This imagery plays throughout the entire story, with players always aware of the fact that, to survive in this harsh world they must always keep themselves on the verge of death.

With three CDs of storyline — many scenes told through some incredibly well-produced CGI FMV — *Galerians* looks to forge new ground in the burgeoning action/adventure genre. With its dark portrayal of the future (not post-apocalyptic, though, we'd like to point out), it's poised to bring in a whole new set of sci-fi adventure fans who just weren't that excited by the prospect of zombie blasting. — *Blake Fischer*

■ And you thought your childhood memories were bad. This shot looks like was inspired by the movie *Akira*

FLAME ON!
Although Rheon can use his powers to make people burst into flame, spontaneous human combustion isn't a problem that most people worry about in real life. Scientists believe that human body (made mostly of water) is not very flammable in general and that most cases of SHC are actually instances where investigators have mistaken people that have accidentally lit themselves on fire. Still, if you suddenly feel a searing 212 degree heat inside of you (hard to miss, we figure), seek care!

■ You don't always need to deal with your psychic powers as demonstrated by the "force push," which throws your enemies across

| **You can make enemies burst into flame, or even make their heads explode**
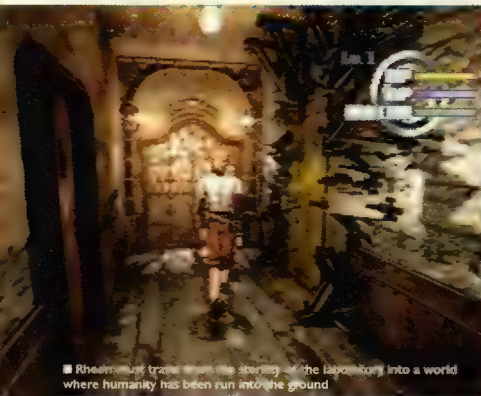
■ Rheon must travel from the starting of the laboratory into a world where humanity has been run into the ground
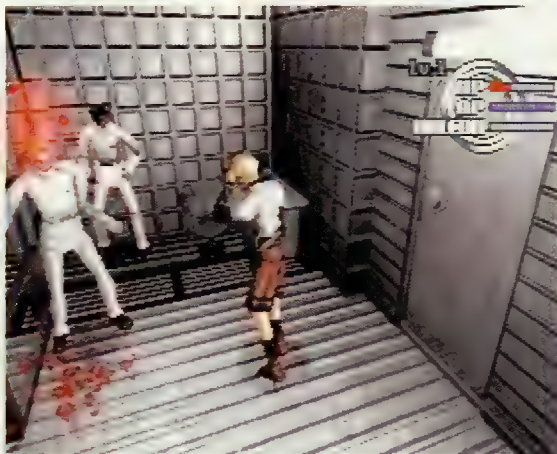
■ When the scientists try to apprehend you and it looks like you can't run away, you can always stand back and make their heads explode

■ *Fear Effect* masterfully combines futuristic sci-fi visions with traditional horror themes for a startlingly fresh action experience

■ **PLAYSTATION**

FEAR EFFECT

■ Publisher: **Eidos**   ■ Developer: **Kronos Digital Entertainment**
■ Release Date: **Q1 2000**   ■ Origin: **US**

IRRATIONAL FEARS

Taphephobia:	Fear of being buried alive
Galeophobia:	Fear of sharks
Triskaidekaphobia:	Fear of the number 13
Helminthophobia:	Fear of worms
Rypophobia:	Fear of dirt
Maieusiophobia:	Fear of pregnancy

Fear is only the beginning

With a new name (see our preview of *Fear Factor*, **NG 56**) and a new release date, one thing that hasn't changed about *Fear Effect* is that it stands to outgun the suspenseful, but sometimes draggy, pace of *Resident Evil* by way of a visceral, thrill-a-minute action/adventure. With an anime look, and some innovative technology to execute dynamic camera angles and zero load-time between rooms, *Fear Effect* is

■ No, this isn't a cut scene. *Fear Effect* uses a rendering technique that makes the 3D look like an anime cartoon. Really

shaping up to be one of the slickest and most stylish games for PlayStation.

Occupying a hefty four discs, the game's setting ranges from a futuristic Hong Kong (complete with *Blade Runner*-style flying cars and pervasive dynamic video screens), to a primitive riverside fishing settlement overrun by possessed villagers, to a surreal vision of the Chinese conception of hell.

The set-up is fed to players in jumbled pieces, with the starting animation depicting a scene that takes place two-thirds of the way through the game. But the story fragments come together for you and your ragtag team of three mercenaries, a French-Chinese belle, Hana, a brawny loose cannon of an Aussie named Deke, and an honorable ex-US military man named Glas. Your team is hired to find the missing daughter of a wealthy Chinese businessman, and as the game progresses, objectives change, from

■ Instead of the traditional health meter, *Fear Effect* instead utilizes a fear meter... represents not only how wounded you are, but also how bad a situation you've put yourself in

making some serious cash to simple self-preservation.

The story has an impressive narrative, but in keeping with the anime style, it is distilled into the hyper-realistic shorthand of comic-book imagery. *Fear Effect* proves that Kronos has finally come into its own, complementing its competent artwork creation with daring and highly playable game design.   — *Jeffrey Adam Young*

■ *Thief II* steals heavily from the themes of steampunk fiction. Huge steam powered machines like this driller as well as other pneumatic devices are found throughout the levels

■ 16-bit textures allow for a level of graphical realism that far surpasses that of the original *Thief*

■ Stay very quiet. Once the guards are alerted to your presence, they will hound you mercilessly. Even worse — they are much more heavily armed than you are

THE OLD FIVE-FINGER DISCOUNT

In Garrett's world, if you get caught with your hand in the till, you get killed nice and quick. Unfortunately for thieves in modern Kabul, life is not so easy. Recently, hundreds of Afghanis gathered in an open-air stadium to watch as doctors, complete with hospital masks, cut off the right hands of four thieves. They were being punished for stealing $50, 12 teapots, and 15 dinner plates.

■ **PC**

THIEF II: THE METAL AGE

■ Publisher: **Eidos** ■ Developer: **Looking Glass** ■ Release Date: **Late Q1 2000** ■ Origin: **US**

Thief II stands out by staying back in the shadows

→ *Thief* may have missed out on mainstream success last year, but it remained a title to watch because of its focus on stealth instead of fragging. With *Thief II*, master thief Garrett is back in a world that promises to be more beautiful and maleficent this time around with more backstory, more political intrigue (a rogue band of religious fanatics called "the mechanists" provides the game with its subtitle: the metal age), and — literally — a new sheriff in town.

As for gameplay, project leader Steve Pearsall promises us that the emphasis this time will be on skulking rather than smiting. "*Thief I* for us was really an experimental title, because we really didn't know if the whole 'stealth gameplay' dynamic would be interesting enough to carry a whole game. But the feedback we

got was that people liked the core 'stealth missions' so that's really what we are going for [with *Thief II*]."

With this in mind, the new level designs focus on the player developing more realistic thieving skills as opposed to just stumbling through each mission. There will be specific parts of the map that will provide an overview of the grounds, allowing players to plan their routes, and lockpicking (an essential skill for breaking into houses) has been even turned into its own minigame requiring players to experiment and memorize different lockpick combinations for different kinds of locks.

With new 16-bit textures, colored lighting, and transparency effects, the graphics in *Thief II* outshine those of the original game. Polygon counts for the
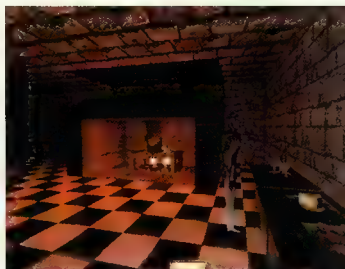
■ You'll also have to stay hidden from the servants in each household. If you get spotted, you'll have to put an arrow through the informer's throat before the alarm gets sounded

character models have gone from 330 to 610, and there has been some tweaking to the AI, so that the easier modes are more accessible and the expert modes are more difficult. The AI in the game will hopefully be better than Pearsall, though — we swiped his watch and wallet on the way out. — *Jim Preston*

▌ **"*Thief I* for us was really an experimental title, because we really didn't know if the whole 'stealth gameplay' dynamic would be interesting enough to carry a whole game"**
— **Steve Pearsall**, lead designer, *Thief II*

■ There are 38 types of planes, from trainers to the exotic "X" fighters like the X-29 — hence the title

■ **PLAYSTATION**

JET: X

■ Publisher: **Infogrames** ■ Developer: **Curly Monsters**
■ Release Date: **March 2000** ■ Origin: **UK**

Aim high by flying low

When Curly Monsters started work on its first game, currently going by the working title *Jet: X*, the concept was simple. "We jokingly called it *Jet Turismo*," recalls producer Andy Satterthwaite. But the joke became serious as they realized that taking everything good about *Gran Turismo* and adding the speed of jet fighters could make a hugely exciting game.

The Championship mode borrows *Gran Turismo*'s idea of starting out with the slowest, unmodified plane and working your way up. Players also have to earn flying licenses and pass exams to gain access to different races. As money is won, planes can be upgraded to make them faster and stronger, or equipped with weapons or stealth capabilities.

Another aspect that will separate casual and hardcore gamers is the handling: Arcade mode operates just like a car, with left, right, up, and down working to an universal axis, no matter what the orientation of the plane. Pro handling, however, maps the commands to the plane's actual orientation, making it far harder to control, although it's the only way to complete the game.

Unlike *Gran Turismo*, the aircraft are not organized by manufacturer, but by countries. Thus only the French will offer Mirages, and Swedes the Drakan.

The 14 racing tracks themselves are optimized for extremely low-level flying. In fact, altitude is one of the key features of the game, since the lower you fly, the faster the plane goes, and anyone expecting to win a race will need to master flying below 100m. Conversely, the ceiling of 1,000m is enforced by making a plane's airspeed bleed off until it stalls.

Currently, work is concentrated on signing up a DJ for the music, and working with a design agency to complete the overall look. The history of plane racing games is spotty at best (*Plane Crazy*, anyone?), but *Jet: X* may buck the trend.   — *Nigel Edge*

■ *Jet: X* will also afford the head-to-head two-player split-screen mode

■ "Check me, I'm crankin' and bankin'!"
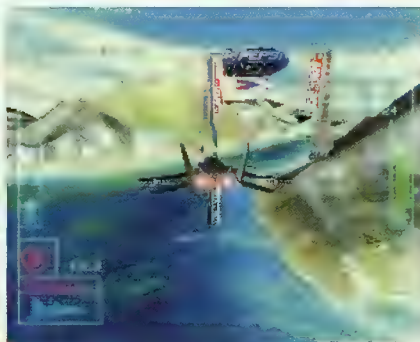
■ The flight courses are bounded by lines of flashing lights, and after three seconds an autopilot cuts in to bring you back into line (which slows you down considerably)

As the first soccer game for Dreamcast treads out onto the turf, note the quality of the crowd graphics

■ **DREAMCAST**

STRIKER PRO

■ Publisher: **Infogrames** ■ Developer: **Rage** ■ Release Date: **February 2000** ■ Origin: **UK**

No MLS? No problem, says Infogrames

Is *Striker Pro* the *NFL 2K* of soccer? Infogrames hopes so. And while the game is still early, developer Rage is planning a complete suite of bells and whistles for the game, including super-realistic models and motion capture (although they look quite good, the players in the screenshots are only placeholders, the producer was quick to inform us.)

Rounding out the package will be full play-by-play and color analysis, fully modeled stadiums, and a complete UEFA license. UEFA? Union of European Football Associations? Why not MLS, Major League

Soccer? The problem with soccer games is that while there's a large enough audience to justify releasing them here, there's rarely a game that a company feels is worth *localizing* for the US market, so if you're into European club teams, you're in luck. If not, you'll only find one US team, the national team. Infogrames reasons that if you're into soccer, you don't mind getting to play as a European team, and it's probably not a bad argument.

MLS license or not, the game will be hitting US Dreamcasts in February, making it the first soccer game on the system. If it can equal Konami's and EA's

best efforts on PlayStation and Nintendo 64, Infogrames may have just created an additional reason to pick up a Dreamcast. — *Chris Charla*

■ Renders (above) give an idea of the graphics Rage is promising. Models below are placeholder

→ Alphas

■ The arenas are fairly small but intricately detailed. This allows for some gorgeous visuals in an area just the right size for a four-player matchup

■ ARCADE

OUT TRIGGER

■ Publisher: **Sega** ■ Developer: **Sega** ■ Release Date: **Q4 1999** ■ Origin: **Japan**

Brutal free-for-all multiplay hits the arcade

The multiplayer deathmatch hasn't had much success in the arcade so far. Whether it's the generic conversion of GLQuake or Atari's respectable WAR: Final Assault, arcadegoers just haven't been biting. Now, with the advent of the Naomi board, developers are giving the idea a second chance with games like Sega AM2's Out Trigger.

You play a member of INTERFORCE, an international anti-terrorism force, and you basically run around, grab coins and weapons off the ground, and shoot

people. Sound mindless? Well, maybe, but let's face it: Quake III isn't exactly known for its depth. What makes Out Trigger fun is its use of the Naomi link-up for up-to-four-player simultaneous play. With three friends, Out Trigger becomes an insane contest of skill (winner is the player with the highest score at the end). Experienced PC gamers will feel right at home with this style of gameplay; its control scheme of a joystick and trackball feels natural after only a few minutes of play. The biggest change from the status quo (besides the absolutely stunning
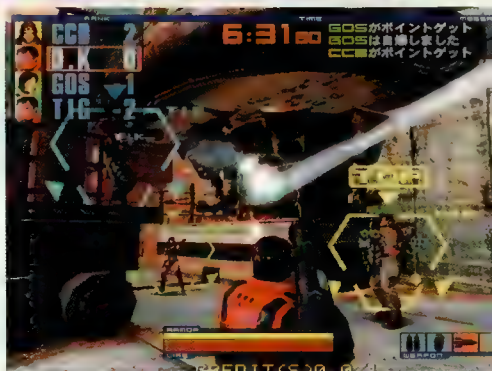
■ The third-person view gives an entirely different feel to the standard shoot-'em-up action, but the camera may swing around too much for those who are more motion-sensitive

Naomi graphics) is the ability to play the game from a choice of first- or third-person perspective.

While no Dreamcast port has been announced, we're fairly confident that Sega will be bringing this one home once it gets its network infrastructure wired for Internet multiplay. With games like this and Spawn (previewed **NG 11/99**), fans of the deathmatch may find a new home in the arcade and (eventually) in front of their TV sets. — Blake Fischer

■ The combination joystick/trackball combination gives the same feel as the mouse/keyboard combination PC gamers are used to

BORN IN THE USA

While deathmatch games seem quite common to US audiences, they are something of a novelty for Japanese gamers. Why? Because PCs (the deathmatch platform of choice) aren't terribly common in the home in Japan.

■ This sword-and-sorcery epic improves every time we take a look at it. Even better, it features tons of different techniques and spells that will take your breath away

■ DREAMCAST

DRACONUS: CULT OF THE WYRM

→ Fantasy adventuring enters the next generation with two sword-and-sorcery games on Dreamcast and the fantastic-looking *Vampire: the Masquerade* on PC (pray for a Dreamcast port). In the meantime, Sega's new *Virtua Tennis* game looks to make waves with one of the most underrated of sporting-game categories. Then, we wrap up this month with some shots of the coming generation of PlayStation games: *Alundra 2, Die Hard Trilogy 2,* and *Koudelka*.

■ *Soul Reaver* looks gorgeous on Dreamcast, and the rock-solid 60fps doesn't hurt either. Unfortunately, the pieces that weren't finished for the PlayStation version (To be continued? What's up with that?) still aren't going to be put in due to continuity with the upcoming *Soul Reaver 2.* Look for this title to make some waves when it's released in January

■ DREAMCAST

SOUL REAVER
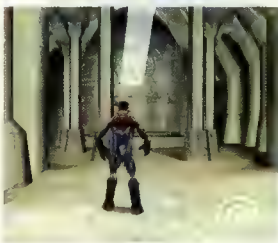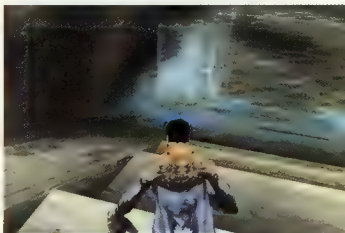
→Milestones
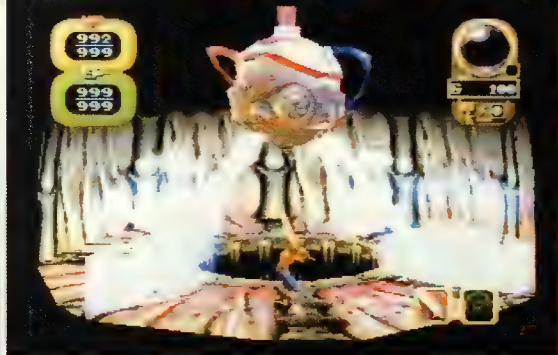
■ *Alundra 2* features a new 3D engine (the first game was sprite based), a new hero character, and more quests than ever before. Look for this game in March

■ PLAYSTATION
ALUNDRA 2

■ McClane is back, and even though he's been delayed for a few months (now a Q1 release) he's looking better than ever as these shots of the gun and driving portions of the game show

■ PLAYSTATION
DIE HARD TRILOGY 2

■ DREAMCAST
GIGA WING

■ Well, Dreamcast can certainly handle any sort of sprite-based shooter that can be thrown at it, but will fans bite at this 16-bit-style shooter? Unfortunately, this one may never make it Stateside

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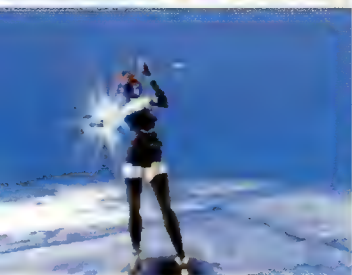
■ SNK is taking the horror concept and fashioning a full-featured RPG. Great effects and creepy environments make this a game to watch when it comes out in March

KOUDELKA
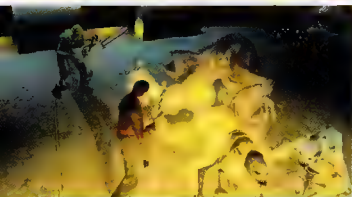
■ This game has us slavering with anticipation. The quest portion is huge, involving, and spans several centuries, while the multiplayer mode is revolutionary in its own right

■ PC

VAMPIRE:
THE MASQUERADE-REDEMPTION

■ ARCADE, DREAMCAST

VIRTUA
TENNIS

■ Tennis? Leave it Sega to not only pick an obscure sporting genre, but to redefine it with this spectacular-looking effort. Even better, this one's scheduled to come home next year. Can you say Internet rankings? We sure hope Sega can

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Software Etc.

Ever cram all night for a test? Work a double-shift? Tough, huh? Remember the physical and mental exhaustion you felt? But it's bush league stuff compared to what goes on in the world of game development. How about working a month — or two months, or three — without a day off? The final phase of game development is brutal, more than a month straight of double-shifts. It's known and feared industry-wide as...

CRUNCH TIME

COFFEE RAMA

Illustrations:
Seth Q. Forester

In the final period of a game's production, development houses transcend their normal work environments and become third-world sweatshops. **Next Generation** explores the nearly-infinite cram session that only ends with a finished game

Crunch time. The term sends shudders down the spines of embattled game developers everywhere. Any developer will tell you that the final stretch of work on any game is the toughest, most demanding, and most time-consuming part of the job. Look at the catalog of titles that just made it to store shelves this holiday season, and we guarantee you'll see

some titles that have taken years off of the lives those who made them.

It's a tough road, but we already we hear you doubters: "These guys make games, they play with Nerf guns at their offices, they get big royalty checks when the games are done. We're not crying over how hard life is for them."

But foam projectiles and big money notwithstanding, game development teams aren't very big (outside Japan, anyway), and everyone carries their share of the workload. More often than not, game developers in the US and UK are working weekends, as well as shifts

that average from about 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. The über-casual dress and intraoffice LAN fragfests may be nice perks, but the demands of the job push game development beyond the realm of a 9-to-5 position; it's a career choice with serious repercussions on family and social life. Those who have been in the industry long enough have seen their fair share of marriages end, and this always comes back in large part to the time demands of the job. If you don't believe us, see what 989 Studios President Kelly Flock has to say in his response to crunch time on page 84.

Here Comes the Crunch

So what is it exactly that makes the closing period of game development so difficult? More often than not, certain problems in development get pushed aside to be fixed at the end. As a game undergoes its transformation from a bare engine to a working prototype, more problems arise. Basically, the more of the game there is developed, the more there is that can go wrong with it.

"It will all come together in the end" is perhaps the most over-used expression in game development. Many features and control issues are tied up at the end of development. According to Shiny Entertainment President David Perry, when a developer says, "it will all come together in the end," that actually means, "Things are buggy, broken, or not implemented yet and they had *better* all come together at the end!"

Almost universally, a game quickly goes from "just functional" to "playable" in the last month of development. At this point in time, a lot of late nights are required to debug and tune the game and finish it on schedule. The development team must tie up all the loose ends behind the graphics, music, sound effects, gameplay mechanics — and increasingly, story and character development. When these elements first come together, the game is said to be in its alpha stage. The elements are there, but the code is still very buggy, and the camera may be wonky, and character AI may be flawed. Once these bugs are worked through, the game enters the beta stage. It is during the beta stage when the final crash bugs are exorcised and tuning begins.

"Tuning," Perry says, "setting variables

CRUNCH TIME

Crunch time stories...

When it comes to "the make or break" period of game development, more often than not it is the developers themselves that are made or broken. And in the crazy world of crunch time, crazy things happen. We polled every industry veteran whose email address we could find and asked for their best crunch time stories. These are their responses, true tales of superhuman endurance married with bizarre circumstance. What more could you ask for?

Sex, wives, and programmers...

We had all been working 100-hour weeks, people were living in their offices. I was trying to get a programmer some new info related to a bug. I knocked on his office door — no response. I knocked a little louder — no response. I could hear soft music from within. Through slits in the window blinds, I could see that the room was, as usual, barely lit by the pale blue glow of the Christmas lights strung in big loops across the ceiling.

So I opened the door, and the programmer was in — so was his wife. They were having sex on the Persian rug. It was like she had come up for a conjugal visit, because her husband was in the prison of game development. (But, hey, we've all been there, right?) I have many more crunch time stories, but — wouldn't you know it — I'm in crunch right now on *Deus Ex*.

Harvey Smith, lead designer on *Deus Ex*, Ion Storm

Testing courage...

I was working for a publisher back in England. We were trying to finish a PC port of an Amiga game in time for the holidays. In order to get through the final bit of testing, I took three testers down to the developer, which was in the middle of nowhere, and set up camp.

We were there for a week before we had a game that we felt was finished. Just before we drove off with the final set of master disks (shows you how old the story is), I thought it would be a good idea to have the testers play through the game, start to finish, one more time. This takes about five hours of playtime — remember, the tester knew the game better than the back of his hand. He got to the last level, finished the last boss, and pow — nothing happened.

We went and woke the programmer (it was about midnight), and told him the problem. He looked at the code, instantly spotted the problem, and in five minutes the poor tester was back playing the game from the start again. Six hours later (hey, he was getting tired), he got to the final boss, killed it, and uh-oh, nothing happened again. The player was just left on the screen by himself — no ending animation, no rolling credits, not even music.

So we politely woke the programmer from his slumber and explained the problem. He looked at the code and muttered, "God, that would never have worked!", typed some more lines of code, and blam, we got a new version.

I looked at the tester. He looked like he'd played this game for weeks, and just after completing an eleven-hour stint, I asked him to do it again. He did. He finished the game, and thankfully it worked right this time. We got in the car and took off, never to come back. We got the game done, just in time, and the poor lead tester spent the next week in bed.

So while a lot of "crunch" stories will talk about how much dedication the programmers had, I think testers probably have the worst part of crunch — they get paid peanuts, are expected to work a 24-hour shift when it comes to finishing product, and they don't even get any credit for it. If it wasn't for the test groups working like crazy, then "crunch mode" would all be for nothing.

Colin Gordon, vice president of product development, BOSS Studios

like difficulty, lives, ammo, and energy can't really be done until the debugging — making it so the gun works or that your enemy is not blind — is out of the way."

Developers are forced to iron out programming bugs, make modifications to the gameplay, iron out the bugs that arose from making the modifications, and then modify some more. The pressure becomes twofold: to deliver the best gameplay possible within

the time limit *and* iron out all the bugs that occur. Often times, new features are added, or planned features are dropped within this time frame. It is the make-or-break period for a game's development.

"Neglecting either tuning or debugging," says Perry, "will simply ruin your years of hard work."

This is the reason for crunch time. After months of work, teams can see the end of the tunnel. But if they don't want to ship an unfinished or unpolished game, the amount of work done per day has to increase dramatically. Unfortunately, the long hours means that productivity usually goes down, necessitating even longer, less productive hours. It's a vicious cycle that ends (rarely) when the team decides the game is finally finished — or (much more frequently) when the publisher demands that the game ship no matter what.

This is the beginning of the marathon sessions. As the days before deadline get closer, the development team ceases to go home, often falling asleep at their keyboards, wearing the same clothes for several days, eating take-out food (mostly pizza) three meals a day. To quote Colonial patriot Thomas

Pinball police...

Paine, these are the times that try men's souls. Crunch time kills friendships, ends marriages, and causes the occasional fistfight.

"There are lots of discussions, lectures, and software products declaring their solution to this 'cramming' at the end," Perry says, "but I think it's now infused into our genetics forever, after years and years of our parents and parents' parents cramming at school."

Of course, developers feel an overwhelming urge to continue adding to a game until the very last moment. But a month or two before a game is completed, it undergoes a "feature lock," which means that the developers cannot add any more features. They must simply debug and tune the game with its current feature set in order to get the project finished. As debugging and tuning commence, particularly in a product that is really running late, features and levels that are proving hard to fix are sometimes unceremoniously chopped. One of recent example of a game that had its feature set frozen was *Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver*. As the project was running a year later than its first scheduled release date, several later levels were cut from the game. As a story-driven adventure, the cutting of the

levels required the design team to amend the story. (This decision came after the voice-over for the project had been recorded, and several sound files for the originally planned ending were buried on the PC version. A group of hardcore gamers found the files, extracted them, and posted them on the Web.)

It's disappointing to hear stories such as the one with *Soul Reaver*. But the truth of the matter is, part of the reason developers work so feverishly during crunch time is to get the tuning down and the gameplay right. Nobody intends to ship a bad product. But as this magazine has reported far too often for our liking, sometimes a development team's reach exceeds its grasp.

Can the Crunch be Stopped?

Why not add more people at the end to a project to help alleviate the crunch? Sounds like a good idea,

but unfortunately, because the creation of software is a very intimate process, adding team members near the end just won't speed development.

"More people just ask too many questions," says Perry. "They actually decrease the efficiency of the people that were really getting the work done. For example, hiring 20 programmers to work with the three you already have will just swamp them with problems, questions, and

Crunch flights...

CRUNCH TIME

Boogie nights...

This is a vulgar story; I beg your indulgence in advance. We were in the closing hours of *OddWorld: Abe's Oddysee*. The game was complete and on the disc, which was getting a final run-through by designers Jeff Brown and Paul O'Connor (we didn't have a test staff on that job, so the designers did the in-house testing). Jeff discovered a crash bug in one of the later venues; "it might have been the Forest Temple ender," so of course everything came to a halt while we tried to track it down.

Eric Yiskis fired up the debugger and Paul played through the game, trying to reproduce the crash. Things were painfully slow. Eric was watching the code one line at a time, translating to a slow-motion, fractured play experience for Paul, meaning his timing was all off and he kept making dumb mistakes. Add that to the accumulated fatigue of several weeks of crunch time, and we weren't at our most efficient. Still, Paul played through the sequence multiple times and we couldn't find anything wrong with the code or reproduce the crash.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the room, Jeff continued to reproduce the bug by playing off the disc. So, we have a real mystery on our hands: a game that crashes off the disc but runs just fine on the development station, and code that looks correct despite a line-by-line examination by our programming staff. Impasse. Deadline. Creeping panic.

And then Craig Ewert, another of our programmers, pops the disc out of the machine, turns it over, and sees there's a bit of crud (well, to be fair, it was... a booger) on the disc. He wipes it off, pops it in the machine, and the level plays just fine. Bug solved. Instead of running it through the de-bugger, we should have run it through the de-boogerer.

Lorne Lanning, President/Creative Director, OddWorld Inhabitants

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third-party bugs."

Ask any painter, sculptor, musician, photographer, or director, and they'll tell you the creative process isn't always orderly. Even a game with a solid design document will still change during production. As games increasingly grow into cinematic, story-driven vehicles that cost more and more to produce, design documents, and pre-production planning are playing a more important role in development, as is asset management during a project.

"I use to waffle on about 'dynamic design,'" Perry says, admitting that there was never a design doc for *Earthworm Jim* or *MDK*. "It was my way of explaining that

No love...

I don't know anyone that has fond memories of crunch time, when friendships end over whose fault the delays were, marriages end because one of the spouses (almost without exception the husband/father) spends too much time at work, and co-workers end up in the occasional fistfight. It's hard to be nostalgic for marathon work sessions created by poor planning, bad management, indecision, insecurity, creative paralysis, and stress.

Kelly Flock, president, 989 Studios

I had shipped tons of games without ever having a design document of any form. Basically we knew the direction we wanted to go in and then just kept enhancing the bits that were working best." A logical philosophy, sure. But perhaps one that is best left with the days of smaller development teams.

"Once teams get over about nine people," Perry says, "things start getting messy. You need to track progress as different people work at different speeds and keep everyone guided. Without a design, this gets out of control really quickly."

Perry makes the inevitable comparison to the more detail-oriented world of Hollywood. "We need to think of our staff as the expensive celebrities that we don't want sitting around while we re-design stuff," he says. "Certainly our focus at Shiny is turning towards tons more pre-planning and a lot more reality checks along the way."

Even the film industry — with its 90-year history, its unions and production positions organized down to the minutiae of who's refilling the potato-chip bowl on the snack truck — still has its share of nightmarish production

over-runs (*Waterworld*, anyone?).

Still, Perry's suggestion is valid, and a model where in-game development is further segmented into pre-production/ production is one we'll likely see many other developers making as well.

But unlike film, game development is an entirely different beast — some seventy years younger and evolving a much faster pace. So much faster, that game developers' staffing needs have changed tremendously with each new generation of hardware.

"Over the past few years," says Chris Taylor, president of Gas Powered Games, and designer of the original *Total Annihilation*, "team sizes have gone from 10 to 20 people, and so much more is required. It's crazy, it's like taking the same team that built a speedboat, and asking them to build a battleship. You can't use the same hull design, and those who try are going to have an extremely difficult time getting things to work."

Taylor, who's busy with his forthcoming action-RPG for Microsoft titled *Dungeon Siege*, remembers a time fairly recently when "you could have guys working on one aspect of the game with very little communication with others, but now everyone needs to work

Die hard developer...

When it came to crunch time, I had the bright idea of staying in the office the entire week just to get things done. It was the early hours of Tuesday morning when I hit the sack. I laid out my sleeping bag on the floor in my office, and sprawled out in nothing but my jean shorts. The floor wasn't comfortable, so I decided to grab the cushions from the couch in our lounge area. I took all but one pillow, and constructed a fairly satisfactory bed. Still, my feet were dangling, so I went back to the lounge for that last cushion.

This particular company has tight security; all employees have security cards that allow them in and out of certain areas in the building. Heading back to my office, I realized I had left my security card on my desk! I was stuck; doomed to be discovered later that morning, half-naked in the lounge. Can you say screwed? It was like one those dreams where you're in school wearing only your underwear.

I couldn't sleep (there were no cushions on the couch). Then I remembered the scene in *Die Hard* when John McClane climbed through the ceilings. My first thought was "Are you nuts?" But why not, it worked for him.

I stacked a chair on top of the refrigerator, climbed up onto it, and eased the tile aside. The light seeping through the cracks was my only guide through a jungle of metal, cables, and pipes. I started to make my way across, fearing I would come crashing down through the fragile tiles. Fortunately, having worked in construction for a few years, I had a good idea where to crawl and which pipes would support my weight.

After making my way over air ducts and under network wires, I reached the other side of the security door — sweating profusely. I began climbing down and realized how dirty I had become as my foot left a long black smudge on the wall. Then I jumped, landed in a cloud of dust, and kissed the carpet.

I had to take a shower and do some major cleaning up. But I learned my lesson — don't leave the office without your card! Needless to say I finished out the week, getting all my work done, and now I have a great story to tell my grandchildren. I'll just have to add the part about me saving the company from terrorists.   **"John McClane," game developer**
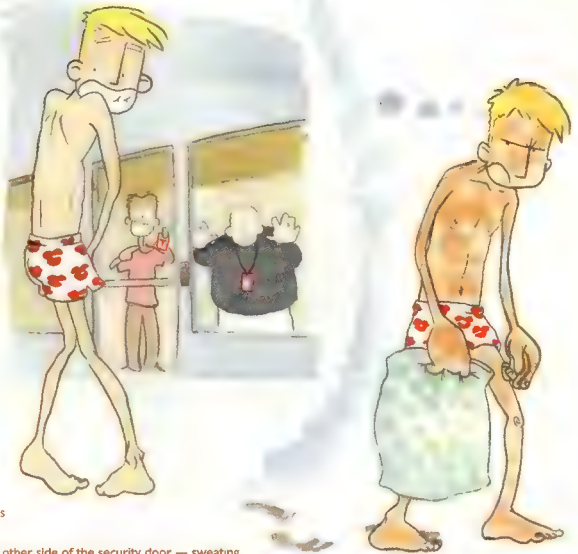
together and stay very informed about all the changes going on with the project."

With the fairly recent 3D graphics revolution, developers have faced new challenges, specifically cinematic ones. And as has been obvious to anyone who's played a game in these past couple of years, in-game cameras have largely been problematic. Does this mean teams will begin to hire cinematographers? Perhaps, but they won't necessarily be part of the core development team.

"Team sizes will continue to grow and key members will get more valuable until it becomes impossible to sustain," Perry predicts. "The nuclear meltdown will result in many teams going bust and the survivors contracting the best studios in specific areas such as motion capture, concept art, facial acting, etc. That way we all 'share' and only pay for work when we need it. Then when later we are spending months on design, for example, we don't have the carry the burden of all that staff."

When Does It End?

Just as with professionals in many different trades, it's easy to see many veteran game developers become accustomed to (and perhaps addicted to) the adrenaline and pressure created by deadline situations. As horrible as crunch time is when you're in it, it's a very intense time, and afterward it's easy to remember it through a fog of nostalgia. Certainly teams can give it their all in a heroic effort to produce the gold master, but how playable the game is when it is considered "done" is entirely another matter. Companies like Rare are sticklers for perfection, with a reputation for big-budget, high-quality titles. Nintendo has

Tuning and timing...

It was April, and I was working onsite at Pumpkin Studios in Bath, England, finishing the realtime strategy game *Warzone 2100*. Basically we had to make the quarter and the team of about 14 people worked nearly 16-hour days for the last three weeks. We had to do an English version, as well as localized French, German, and Italian versions.

Toward the final week, testers were complaining that the game was too hard. As an RTS game, proper balancing and tuning is crucial. Add into the mix over 2,000 units that can be created, and it was extremely complicated to change the values for tuning. However, Jim Bambra, the project director, did it to appease the testers. Two days before the final master was due, the test team now found that the campaign and skirmish were too easy. Jim gave us this "I will kill you" look, and then called a company meeting with the whole test team. People were split on the difficulty, but several campaign missions were flagged. Jim then did a final edit, prayed to the tuning gods, and thankfully it turned out fine — everyone was happy with the balance.

However, there was one major complaint from users, resulting from a feature we added in the final month. It was the mission timer. This basically was an Eidos idea. We wanted a one- to two-hour time for each mission. This would prevent users from refining endless supplies of resource, attacking the computer, and then repairing the unit to gain experience points. If you set your forces to do this automatically, after about eight hours, you were nearly invincible for remainder of the game.

The programmers could not easily limit the resource, so the timer was enacted to stop cheating. Our testers always had enough time to finish the mission, however — some missions were tight with the time limit. A large percentage of RTS crowd and some review editors bemoaned the timer as an unnecessary annoyance. This was frustrating, because they did not appreciate our position on its validity.

As an American producer working with a UK developer, one of my contributions was providing a magical elixir that propelled the team to finish the code and put out a quality title. It came from the newly opened and previously-never-heard-of Starbucks Coffee of Bath, England.

Eric Adams, producer, Eidos

CRUNCH TIME

Full development jacket...

When I think of crunch time, I think of pizza. Basically, pizza equals crunch time. If I go somewhere that makes pizza, I feel like it's crunch time. It's like Nam. You start hearing helicopters and people shouting at you that there isn't enough room on the chopper for any more wounded. You start seeing bullets whipping past your head, and then somebody slaps you in the face, right there in Pizza World! It can get ugly. Oh yeah, and then there is Chinese food, and...

Chris Taylor, president, Gas Powered Games

often delayed Rare titles just to give the team the required time to perfect the game before it ships. And while Rare might have been able to finish *Perfect Dark* in time for the holidays, Nintendo opted to delay the title until spring, citing the developer's preference to meet the expectations of the millions of gamers who enjoyed *GoldenEye*

Concert bound...

The Turbine art department was in crunch to get its bugs killed on *Asheron's Call*. My co-worker Pete and I had spent several days in the office from early morning until around 2 a.m. to get as much done as possible. After a few days of this, I realized that our tickets for the big Tom Waits show were on the night of the "true-and-honest-I-really-mean-it-this-time" deadline.

I came in early, 10 a.m., and Pete came in sometime later. He gave me the tickets and said we'd meet at the show, then he left to pick his brother up for the concert. My wife and I drove into Boston and got to the venue. The show started — and no Pete or brother. Three or four numbers in, I began to wonder if I had asked Pete to pick ME up at the office before the show, or whether we had agreed to meet here. I started to get REALLY nervous. But then they showed up. Traffic.

The show was great, ending around 11 p.m. My wife and I drove home, and I immediately got back in the car and went back to work, finishing around 3 a.m. The next day I was told that the REAL deadline wasn't for another day or so — of course.

Sean Huxter, lead artist, Turbine Games

Even more to the extreme is Id Software. The developer of *Quake* refuses to set a release date for *Quake III: Arena*, and simply argues the game will ship when it's done — according to the company, making a projected date early in development would be as valid as pulling a random date out of a hat. Does that mean everyone at Id works 9 to 5 and goes home? Quite the contrary, according to Id President Todd Hollenshead. "I don't think people on the outside can really understand," says Hollenshead, "what a pressure cooker people are put in when they work at Id."

Aside from the scrutiny the Id developers receive from the exposure in magazines worldwide and with millions of Internet users, Hollenshead suggests the pressure is on internally as well. He tells **Next Generation** that Id set a company revenue record in 1997, bringing in twenty-eight million dollars.

"And that's with 13 people," says Hollenshead. "It's pretty easy to do the math, it's well over two million dollars per employee in revenue. So it's a pretty high productivity bar when you ask your co-workers and yourself, 'Have you made your two million dollars in revenue for the company this year?'"

While Id has the unique luxury of funding its own game development, most developers rely on installment payments from publishers that come in when the game meets developmental milestones. Finishing a game when it's due to the publisher is important in that the developer may require the final milestone payment to maintain payroll and general business expenses.

And at the end of the day, some titles need to ship for financial reasons. Often times a publisher needs to make a judgment call on whether added development time will actually add significant improvements to the gameplay experience or simply tack on more development costs while insignificant effects are added. Gabe Newell, president of Valve, has told **NG** that *Half-Life* could have gone out the door a year earlier when it was intended to ship. But he intimates it would have been merely the shadow of the hit game it was. Sierra made the wise decision to allow Newell's team the extra year required to make *Half-Life* great.

There are other external factors that often lead to shipping decisions made regardless of the developer's opinion on

The deathmarch...

I call the brutal last phase of shipping a game "The Deathmarch." After working a year-and-half-plus on a game, you completely lose your perspective. You can't even see what you thought would be fun about the game in the first place. You only see a growing stack of bug reports that have to be re-created, isolated, and fixed.

The pressure of working around the clock generates the overwhelming wish for it to just be over. Everyone is on autopilot, staggering toward the finish line called "gold master." Not everyone on the team makes it. There are casualties on the deathmarch. Some simply cannot go on — pitching forward into the pizza box, asleep mid-bite. Others go psychotic, jabbering nonsense at their monitors. The team is often forced to leave them behind with some cigarettes and a single bullet. But for those that survive and make it home — victory is sweet. Shipping any game is a profound badge of honor, respected by all developers. It's what separates the men from the boys-that-can't-ship.

Mark Long, founder, Zombie Studios

how finished the game is. Many publicly-held publishing companies, including Electronic Arts, Activision, GT Interactive, and 3DO, need to show profits to shareholders every quarter. If a game fails to ship during its scheduled quarter, the company cannot record the subsequent revenue the game generates for that quarter. Failing to ship a game may result in a loss for that period, which in turn usually has a negative effect on the stock price. This far too often leads to the "ship now, patch it later" mentality that plagues so many PC games.

"When I talk to developers working for public companies," says Perry, "the common thing they hear is 'just ship it! Adding that effect won't sell us another copy!'" Perry accepts that his company's *Messiah* project is late, but is confident as the team just keeps pushing ahead quarter to quarter. "It would have been very easy just to license the *Quake* engine and whack out a few *Quake* clones," he says, "but we choose to try new stuff. Some public companies like Interplay see the value in hiring and nurturing creativity."

Crunched Out

It is unlikely that game development will be organized to the point where crunch time will eliminated in the near future. If ever.

Long hours will undoubtedly remain the method to this madness. Yet with all the pressures, deadlines, and problems developers must overcome on a daily basis, a finished game is undoubtedly the miracle of science married to an incredible work ethic. Although it sometimes seems like a game will never be finished while you're working on it — and in fact one developer tells us, "I once figured out, statistically, that no game should ever ship" — it seems that for every last-minute disaster that requires a marathon session, in most games there are an almost equal number of last-minute miracles: hacks that double the framerate, brilliant gameplay tweaks, and so on. (Chris Taylor reveals to us that he keeps a grocery list of miracles he expects from his staff. Unbeknownst to them, he secretly crosses off these miracles as his team completes them.)

So the next time you walk down the aisles at your local game store, think about all the cups of coffee and stacks of pizzas that have been consumed in the production of each game. Even more importantly, think about the programmers, designers, and testers who can't remember certain months of their lives because every moment was lived in a fog of bug-reports and variable tweaking. We're not saying you have to like all their work. (Good lord, no.) But as their own stories suggest, don't let us catch you thinking they had it all too easy.

NextGen

A very short story...

I'm in crunch time right now! AAAAAAAH!

Tom Hall
President and *Anachronox* designer, Ion Storm

If it's **important** to you, it's on your
Daily Radar

→Finals

Just when you start to think you're seeing the dregs of the holiday season, a whole bunch of great games show up on your desk. It's a good month after all...

■ Nintendo may claim to have stolen Kobe's moves, but they're present and accounted for on Dreamcast. Here, Robinson gets on a poster the hard way, courtesy of a high-flying Bryant

■ There are lots of camera views to choose from, but this classic *Run and Gun* perspective works best (above). Shaq backs an opponent down low (below)

■ Dreamcast

NBA 2K

■ Publisher: **Sega** ■ Developer: **Visual Concepts**

The best basketball game ever? Mmm, could be...

NBA 2K is easily the best-looking and best-playing basketball game to date (which still means it has a few glitches, but hey), with graphics that even go beyond those of *NFL 2K*. From the courts to the crowd animations, players on the bench, and a coach who paces up and down the sideline, everything looks perfect.

Players' faces look so close to their real-life counterparts that it's downright eerie. Their expressions even change depending on their action — when Shaq dunks, he gives you a look so mean that you want to apologize just for being on the court. Players' bodies are done to perfection as well. When you put a smaller point guard next to

a 7-foot center, the size difference is extreme. Not only does this look realistic, but it really affects the gameplay, too. If John Starks ends up covering

David Robinson in the paint, forget it — Starks is getting pushed under the basket and dunked on. Likewise, a small and speedy point guard will blow past a center if he

POUNDING IN THE PAINT

Right away, one of the best things you'll notice about *NBA 2K* is its amazing post game. Once you've passed the ball down low to a bruiser like Shaq, just press the Left Shoulder Button to start backing down your opponent. If a smaller guy is guarding you, it won't take much to push him out of the way and jam it home.

95

99

102

➡PlayStation

➡PC

The Rating System

Since we're living in a time when even average games are pretty good, we at **Next Generation** will continue to demand even better. Note that a three-star rating is a typical "good" game, so expect to see a lot of them.

★★★★★ **Revolutionary**
★★★★☆ **Excellent**
★★★☆☆ **Good**
★★☆☆☆ **Fair**
★☆☆☆☆ **Bad**

● Denotes a review of a Japanese product

tries to cover him tight on the outside. This is one of the game's main strengths, because it so accurately represents how the game is really played. It's all about individual matchups and finding ways to exploit them in your favor.

Shooting, passing, stealing, and all other major actions are done just like they are in every other basketball game. Free-throw shooting is radically different, however. You have to gently press both shoulder buttons to get two arrows to line up over the basket, and depending on how good a shooter you've got, the buttons' analog sensitivity makes it easier or harder. This could be a controversial new addition, since many people either seem to hit their shots every time, or just can't get the hang of it at all. It is kind of cool, though, and kudos should always be given to developers who try something new.

The game's dunks look great, but still, a Direct Dunk-type feature would have been much appreciated. As it is, the dunk you

pull off depends on your player and his spot on the court, and it's nearly impossible to consistently pull off a favorite slam on purpose. Alley-oop dunks are included, and usually work well. Just tap any direction on the digital D-Pad simultaneously with the Right Shoulder Button, and if you've got a man down low with a clear path to the basket, he'll jump up to catch the lob. The only problem with alley-oops is that many times your teammates will act plain stupid. They'll get wide open inside, raise their arm to call for the ball, and as soon as you toss it, they run away from the basket, despite the fact they were still open. Wha?!

Unfortunately, that isn't the game's only rough spot. Half of the time, your guard on the right side of the court will stand with one foot out of bounds. You dribble down the court, pass him the ball, and — instant turnover. There are plenty of little problems like this, but the only other really bad one is that

■ NBA 2K does a great job of blending a sim with fast paced arcade-style action

during a game, you can only check out player stats for that single game — you don't get to see any season averages. So, if you're trying a team with players that you're unfamiliar with, there's no way to find out what they're capable of. Two seconds left and you need someone who can nail the three? Eenie, meeny,

miney, mo...

Overall, though, hoops fans will be blown away by NBA 2K. The best thing about the game is that it does a great job of meshing a true basketball simulation with a smooth, fast-paced arcade feel, without going overboard into NBA Jam territory.   — Chris Slate

➡NextGen ★★★★☆

Bottom Line: It's easy to pick up and get into, and looks flat-out gorgeous. If you're an NBA fan, this game alone is worth the price of a Dreamcast

| Players' faces look so close to their real-life counterparts that it's downright eerie

■ The realism in this game is unrivaled. From the sweet looking courts and crowds (left), to the rim-rattling animations of "Half-Man, Half-Amazing," it's all good

Rippin' Riders

■ Platform: **Dreamcast**
■ Publisher: **Sega** ■ Developer: **UEP Systems**

■ **Without a doubt, *Rippin' Riders* is the best-looking snowboarding game on any platform. It's just too bad the gameplay is so dated**

Rippin' Riders has all the elements necessary for a kickass snowboarding game except one: innovation. UEP Systems produced the first snowboarding game for the PlayStation, the original *Cool Boarders*, and it was good. But games have moved on since 1997. Gamers expect more than just a visual update — unfortunately, *Rippin' Riders* isn't much more than that.

The gameplay found in *Rippin' Riders* is nearly identical to that found in *Cool Boarders*, right down to the scoring and trick execution. The core of the game is still racing down a mountain, and tricks are still restricted to trick areas. You can execute tricks at other places within the level, but you won't receive any points for them. Tricks are still somewhat canned, in that you must hold down the proper buttons before jumping. After release, the trick simply plays out until you land.

There is a nifty two-player mode included in the game that gives new meaning to "crushing" your opponent. Every time you perform a successful trick, your portion of the split screen gets larger and your opponent's gets smaller. You can win a match by reaching the goal first or by crushing your opponent's screen.

In the end, *Rippin' Riders* is just *Cool Boarders* on Dreamcast, albeit with a few new tracks and an excellent graphics upgrade. While enjoyable, it's still decidedly average. — *Adam Pavlacka*

⬇ **Next**Gen ★★★☆☆

Bottom Line: Here's hoping the next boarding game to come out of Sega is a follow-up to *Steep Slope Sliders*.

Slave Zero

■ Platform: **Dreamcast**
■ Publisher: **Infogrames** ■ Developer: **Accolade**
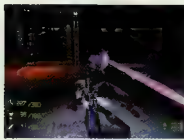
■ **You have to stick with it, but in the end you may find *Slave Zero* rewarding**

A 3D shooter with a few minor pretensions, *Slave Zero* is a strange beast filled with odd design choices — not *bad* ones, necessarily, but odd.

At heart it's your basic mech game in a dystopian urban setting. However, the mech you pilot (the "slave" of the title) is a far cry from the sleek suits found in some games, or even the lumbering behemoths in others. Instead, it sort of clomps along with this odd rhythm all its own,

which takes a bit of getting used to.

However, it also forces a certain creativity in how you respond to the hordes being thrown at you. There's a guided missile upgrade that lets you shoot around corners and over obstacles, and the levels are filled with odd cubbyholes and platforms, all for sneaking around and sniping from a distance. It's a different gameplay dynamic, that's for sure. Not better, but not worse either. Just different.

On the technical end, there's a vague lack of polish: busy layouts with smeary textures and frame rates that are only functional. But through a combination of intelligent programming, level design, and player control, the camera is almost never an issue. However, the controls are then so complex that while you can do things like pick up cars and throw them, it's mostly impractical. — *Jeff Lundrigan*

⬇ **Next**Gen ★★★☆☆

Bottom Line: *Slave Zero* may not be to everyone's taste, but it does offer a different sort of challenge for those so inclined.

■ **Dreamcast**

Evolution

■ Publisher: **Ubi Soft** ■ Developer: **Sting**

Sometimes, good looking is good enough
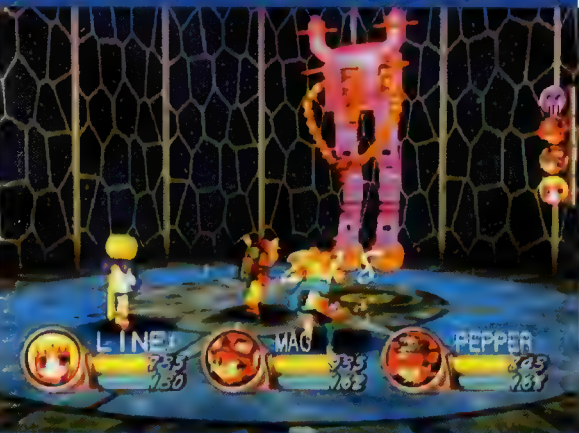
■ **Much of the game is a dungeon crawl, but since you can see the monsters and avoid attacks, it's less tedious than it might have been**

➜ As Ubi Soft likes to point out, this is the first RPG for Dreamcast in the US. As an RPG, it is, ultimately, pretty average. As an RPG for *Dreamcast*, though, it's a sweet taste of things to come.

First, the not-so-hot *Evolution*'s story and structure aren't especially notable. You play as "Mag Launcher," a professional adventurer who owes money to the Adventurers Society. So, he and his (oddly mute) girl-friend Linear and pals Chain and Pepper venture into a series of dungeons collecting artifacts of an ancient, more advanced civilization to sell. The dungeons are randomly generated, but the layouts are simple — except for different textures on the walls and tougher monsters, there's little to distinguish one from another. The story is simple as well, centering on the search for the famed "Evolutia," an artifact of great power.

Still, there are a few deft gameplay touches. The battle system and the way the characters gain new abilities are slightly different and interesting. Best of all, as in

Square's *Chrono Trigger*, you can see the monsters and avoid them if you choose, and it's even possible to sneak up on them from behind — a very, very nice feature.

But what sets *Evolution* apart is its glossy, remarkably sharp graphics — in some ways are the best yet for an RPG. The game has the advantage of being on Dreamcast, true, but

the character designs are also undeniably cute, with a wealth of facial expressions and a depth of personality that adds a lot. No slight against developer Sting, but it does make you wonder what could be accomplished in the hands of a major RPG powerhouse, and what other goodies can we expect in the future. — *Jeff Lundrigan*

I had so much fun on,
Meg. I hope you invite me aga-
We'll see you around. Ciao!

■ **This is, however, one great-looking game, with glossy environments and characters that have plenty of character**

⬇ **Next**Gen ★★★☆☆

Bottom Line: A case of style with just enough substance to back it up, *Evolution* is a charmer despite a few unimpressive edges.

Speed Devils

■ Publisher: **Ubi Soft** ■ Developer: **Ubi Soft**

Dreamcast gets a next-gen racer worthy of the name

■ The graphics in the game are impressive: little drawn-in and great highlighting make the cars shine

■ The lighting effects are nice. Rain in the desert (right) creates a somber mood, and the jungle (left) can get spooky

➜ New systems are usually soaked with mediocre racers, and Dreamcast hasn't been an exception. Luckily *Speed Devils* more than makes up for the drabness of games like *Suzuki Alstare* and *Monoco*. The game is a partial upgrade from Ubi's under-appreciated *Speed Busters* for PC, and it has the same feel. The racing engine is solid, and although there are only four other cars on the tracks, we found the AI fairly good, in a cheating sort of way — getting in first place is pretty easy in the first couple of racing classes (there are four total), but if you slip up at all, you get passed.

What's interesting here are the tracks: they're long, like rally tracks, but each race is three laps. While the texturing isn't overly impressive (perhaps due to the game's PC roots), the tracks are packed with interesting models — from a lumber mill in Canada to decrepit casino signs in Nevada — that make for equally interesting shortcuts and help create a feeling of a living track. The other thing that makes the tracks exciting are the random events. While some, like Godzilla bearing down on your car in the Hollywood studio

are just humorous are a couple others, like the moose that wander across the track in Canada, can change how you have to race. Keeping the long tracks interesting and different on each lap, the end result is a welcome compelling combination: the humor of *SF Rush* and the length of a rally title.

Throw in everything else — expect it from a custom racer like Arcade and Championship modes, upgrading your car, pick-your tracks (which can be raced mirrored and backwards), the mysterious Racer X — you've got a game with serious staying power. The only downsides are the multiplayer is two-player only, and night racing leaves a lot to be desired — but just try. Even with those few though, *Speed Devils* still ranks as the best Dreamcast racer to date. — *Dan Chorta*

➤ **Next**Gen ★★★★☆

Bottom Line: Simply put, it's the best racing game you can find on Dreamcast today

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Psychic Force 2012

■ Platform: **Dreamcast**
■ Publisher: **Acclaim** ■ Developer: **Taito**

■ *Psychic Force 2012* manages to make even the most extreme special effects seem boring

What can you say about *Psychic Force 2012*? Well, not much, except that it ain't very good.

A fighting game, *Psychic Force 2012* does the usual, pitting you against a series of opponents or against a friend in Versus mode. The catch here is that it copies the *Dragon Ball Z* series — *why*, we have no idea — and sets the action in an open-air arena with the two characters flying around. This means that for the most part, you have to throw fireballs and other special effects at one another, since getting close

enough to actually land a physical punch is mostly an exercise in sheer frustration.

Besides the frustration factor, there's not much here to distinguish the game. The graphics are strictly OK, with only the bare minimum of creativity shown in the design of the special attacks. Also, given that the only 3D things on screen are the two characters (the backgrounds are simple 2D backdrops), you'd think the designers would at least throw a gazillion polygons at them and make them look good, but no, they're barely above the level of your average PlayStation brawler, and not even in the same league as *Power Stone*, *Soul Calibur*, or even the three-year-old characters from *Virtua Fighter 3tb*.

In short, *Psychic Force 2012* is a good example of a bad idea, done badly. Avoid at all costs. — *Jeff Lundrigan*

➤ **Next**Gen ★☆☆☆☆

Bottom Line: A waste of money and time.

Sega Rally 2

■ Platform: **Dreamcast**
■ Publisher: **Sega** ■ Developer: **Sega/AM 2**

■ No! Don't look! It's *Sega Rally 2*, and if you're not careful, it will take over your life too

A word of caution here: *Sega Rally 2* is not the sort of game you beat. Instead, it beats you.

This is a rather realistically challenging (although not necessarily *realistic*) rally racing game, with a short list of courses and a slightly longer list of vehicles. Much like AM 2's *Virtua Fighter* series, which rewards the dedicated purist, *Sega Rally 2* is brutal on the casual gamer. It will take you weeks, if not months, to even finish a course, much less win,

place, or show. The idea here is to ever more finely hone your skills, learning every curve and bump in the tracks, and gradually shaving split seconds off your time. You start to actually *dream* about the perfect powerslide, y'know?

It's not fun, exactly, but it is oddly compulsive in a masochistic kind of way. It looks pretty good, with a number of strange details, like little animals that run across the road. You can also customize the cars in a number of ways — the slightest advantage can be the difference between hitting the check points and failing miserably.

Several different play modes include a split-screen two-player option that's great for torturing guests at parties. The thought of the ten-year Career mode, though, is enough to make you wet the bed. — *Jeff Lundrigan*

➤ **Next**Gen ★★★☆☆

Bottom Line: This is a mountain, a test of will. Don't confuse it with a game. It was never *meant* to be a *game*.

Earthworm Jim 3D

■ Platform: **Nintendo 64**
■ Publisher: **Rockstar Games** ■ Developer: **VIS Interactive**
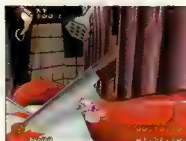
■ Even the most diehard *Earthworm Jim* fans (and we know there must be some) should stay away from this N64 train wreck

Hey Jim. Been a while — and either it's been too long, or not nearly long enough.

The worst thing about *Earthworm Jim 3D* is that it really is a good-looking game, with bright colors, clean textures, and cleaner lines, with barely a hint of the murky fuzziness that's common to so many N64 games. All the gloss, however, does little to hide the lazy control, arbitrary goals, annoying camera, and level designs that are painfully simplistic when they aren't infuriatingly obtuse.

Trapped inside his own brain, Jim has to find the "udders of lucidity" and as many of his scattered marbles as he can, while defeating the memories of his old enemies. Not a bad premise, but the process seems to involve a lot of running back and forth over the same beaten areas, or repeating tasks because some vital bit of information (like a time limit) isn't mentioned. Although there is some variety to the gameplay — it isn't all run-jump-shoot — much of the variety is provided by sections that are only challenging because they're difficult to control, exemplified by the very first boss, Psy-Crow. Jim has to pick up blue balloons (Why? Who knows?) while riding a kind of jet-ski pig that handles like a brick. At some point you wind up asking yourself: who in their right mind would think this was fun?   — *Jeff Lundrigan*

NextGen ★☆☆☆☆

Bottom Line: Oh, and the music is annoying too.

Lego Racers

■ Platform: **Nintendo 64**
■ Publisher: **Lego Media** ■ Developer: **High Voltage**

■ It would seem that Lego blocks defy easy simulation — or maybe Lego blocks just have a Y2K problem, or something

Lego blocks rule. And it would be nice if this game, which lets you create your own race cars using virtual Lego blocks, ruled too, but unfortunately it doesn't. Far from it. While creating and testing your own cars is really a lot of fun — especially since the way you put your car together has a major effect on how it controls — the actual racing is awful.

Not only is the framerate nauseatingly slow, the track designs are weak. While you need to use typical kart racing tactics like powerslides, a lot of the cars (both those you make and the premade ones) feel top-heavy somehow. AI also leaves a lot to be desired. Each track has a boss character who is always in first, and while you can end up in second place without any effort, beating the first-place character is far too demanding a challenge, especially given that the game is obviously aimed at younger kids.

Add a frustrating interface, and almost all the benefits of creating your own cars, which really is a great feature, are gone. This isn't a terrible game, and to be fair, there are a lot of tracks to race on, but despite being able to make your own cars, the overall experience is uninspiring.   — *Chris Charla*

NextGen ★★☆☆☆

Bottom Line: Save your cash and buy real Lego blocks instead.

Nintendo 64

Rayman 2

■ Publisher: **Ubi Soft** ■ Developer: **Ubi Soft**

A plucky little guy with no arms hits a high note

■ Rayman 2 has everything you could ask for in a modern 3D platform game
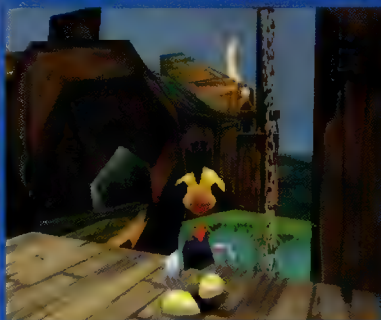
■ It's cute, it controls well, it doesn't require you to do the same thing over and over, and yes, we like it a lot

This is very nice indeed. The *Rayman* series has always been a bit underappreciated, premiering as it did on the doomed 3DO system, then segueing to the even-more-doomed Jaguar. It was, however, one of the better platformers of the late 2D era, colorful and creative. *Rayman 2* brings the series into 3D, but it's lost nothing in the transition. Using the N64 Expansion Pak, the game is about as pretty as anything we've seen on the system, with sharp textures and nary a polygon out of place. The camera isn't perfect, but it rarely gets in the way, and the challenge ramps up at a steady pace, almost never asking for more skill than you've developed. Although it certainly doesn't feature anything in the way of gameplay that hasn't been done before, it does boast snappy, intuitive control and a thoughtful, intelligent level design. Together, they keep the action varied and never leave you lost or feeling cheated. There's no need to backtrack, no fruitless dead-ends, and yet there are enough hidden goodies to reward careful exploration and clever problem solving.

In fact, with its cute character designs and slick, polished gameplay, *Rayman 2* is one of the few titles that can honestly claim to have something to offer any gamer of any age or skill. Pick it up, and you won't be disappointed.
    — *Jeff Lundrigan*

NextGen ★★★★☆

Bottom Line: Did we mention how very nice a game this is?

Winback: Covert Operations

■ Publisher: **Koei** ■ Developer: **Omega One**

Hide. Sneak. Shoot.
Everything a game needs

→ Imagine a combination of gameplay ideas from both *Metal Gear Solid* and *Time Crisis*. Now place them in a gray, fuzzy environment. Populate said environment with lots of terrorists to shoot. Mix in a few simple puzzles. Sure, *Winback* may not be the most original action game, but what else are you going to play until *Perfect Dark* ships?

Think of the way the foot pedal from *Time Crisis* would work in a 3D environment and you'll understand the basic mechanic of *Winback*. Pressing the action button when standing near a crate, pillar, or wall will cause your character to step back against it (à la Solid Snake). When you draw your gun, your character will pop

around the side of the object to fire at your target and then duck back when the button is released. Despite the fact that you're a gung-ho SWAT-type, you cannot move and shoot at the same time, so protecting yourself during firefights becomes very important.

Winback's environments are very simplistic and the game itself is blurry. You've got a few weapons, a lot of empty-feeling environments, and a smattering of bosses to beat. Despite these shortcomings, the game still manages to entertain, mostly because there's nothing else like it on N64. There's even a multiplayer option, where up to four players can stalk each other, but it's definitely an extraneous bonus. — *Chris Kramer*

■ No prizes for originality, but *Winback* manages to entertain

■■ **Next**Gen ★★★☆☆

Bottom Line: The action is simple and the environments are not very detailed, but *Winback* is fun in an arcade-like fashion.

NBA Showtime: NBA on NBC

■ Platform: **Nintendo 64** ■ Publisher: **Midway** ■ Developer: **Midway**

NBA Showtime would probably best be called *NBA Jam 64*. Created for Midway by several of the developers responsible for the *NBA Jam* arcade smash, *NBA Showtime* features the same two-on-two style of basketball, solid gameplay, outlandish slam dunks, character animations, and scores of hidden secrets that made the coin-op title such a hit.

The standard control scheme remains: there are shoot, pass, and turbo buttons; combinations of these will lead to accelerated throws, dekes, and jams with players soaring three times the height of the basket. All of the current NBA

teams are present, though the differences between the courts seems to be purely a matter of plunking down a different team logo. There is a thorough create-a-player option for modifying everything from height, weight, shooting ability, dunking ability, and defense. The only downside to this game is that it's pretty repetitive for a single player (the gamer dunks the ball, the computer dunks the ball, etc.) but it's a blast

■ Tight graphics, voiceovers, and corporate logos make *NBA Showtime* closely resemble an actual NBC broadcast

when played with a group of friends. — *Doug Trueman*

■■ **Next**Gen ★★★☆☆

Bottom Line: Arcade-style basketball action captured remarkably well on Nintendo 64.

Ready 2 Rumble Boxing

■ Platform: **Nintendo 64** ■ Publisher: **Midway** ■ Developer: **Midway**

Originally developed for Dreamcast, *Ready 2 Rumble* is still the same game on Nintendo 64, it just isn't quite as polished.

Visually, the game is running at a lower resolution and the characters are not composed of as many polygons. During a heated match, the framerate also drops a bit, leaving you with a jerky screen instead of the smoothly animated one we've come to expect.

Some of the "unnecessary" animations have also been removed. The game still plays the same, which is ultimately what matters the most, but it was the little things that added personality,

and much of that character has been lost.

Most of the music and voice tracks have been kept, but they have been downsampled. Trying to compare the sound of the N64 version to the Dreamcast version is like comparing a mono AM radio to a Harmon Kardon stereo system.

If you've never seen the Dreamcast version before, the Nintendo 64 port should be more than enough to keep you happy. Once you make the

■ Due to the limitations of N64, *Ready 2 Rumble* is missing some of the little touches that made the Dreamcast version unique

comparison, though, *Ready 2 Rumble* on N64 looks bland. — *Adam Pavlacka*

■■ **Next**Gen ★★★☆☆

Bottom Line: After playing the Dreamcast version for months, it is hard for us to accept an inferior version of the game, even if it does play just as well.

Turok: Rage Wars

■ Platform: **Nintendo 64** ■ Publisher: **Acclaim** ■ Developer: **Acclaim**

The very definition of a "quickie," *Rage Wars* feels a bit desperate, as if Acclaim needed something to fill out the holiday season. The guts of the previous *Turok* titles have been ripped free, leaving a bland multiplayer game with very little reason to play. There is a single-player game, but it's merely a ladder-like competition where you face off against bots of dubious intelligence. You can open up secret levels and hidden skins by completing mission trees, but the rewards are not worth the time or the effort they demand.

Sure, there's no fog, but that's because each of the teeny-tiny levels are roughly the

same size as the kiddie play areas at McDonalds, and about as much fun explore. The four types of play — Deathmatch, Team, Capture the Flag, and Frag Tag (in which one person is a helpless monkey or chicken) — quickly become tedious as you realize that almost every one of the levels is exactly the same square block of corridors.

In a nod to family values, you can play co-op with your buddies as well as shoot at them, but it's still not much fun. The splatter

■ *Rage Wars* is pretty tedious whether alone or with friends

has been scaled way back, even for the Cerebral Bore, one of the nastiest weapons to ever shred flesh in a FPS. — *Chris Kramer*

■■ **Next**Gen ★★☆☆☆

Bottom Line: If you want a good multiplayer N64 game, pick up *Quake II* or go back to *GoldenEye*.

55

■ The game ... delivers the ... ... WWII ...
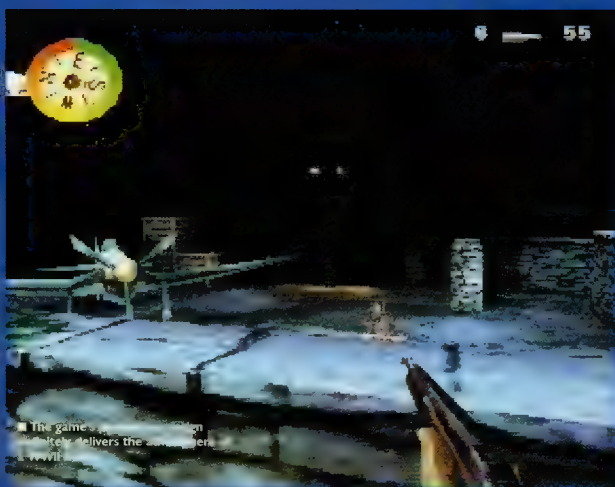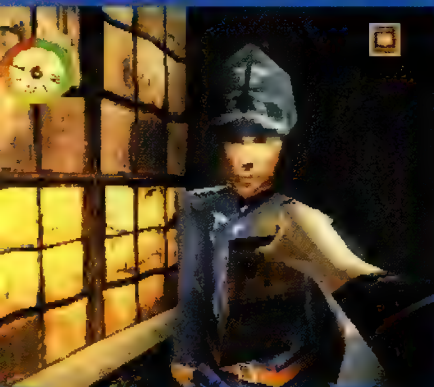
When you play a lot of first-person shooters, sometimes it seems like any new wrinkle is a godsend. The really cool thing about *Medal of Honor*, though, is that its new wrinkles add up to a complete package.

The game puts you in the role of an OSS officer during WWII, and sends you on missions into Nazi-occupied territory that vary from search-and-destroy to undercover operations. The DreamWorks developers put a lot of effort into making this

■ PlayStation

Medal of Honor

■ Publisher **Electronic Arts** ■ Developer **DreamWorks**

Because nothing is more fun than killing a whole bunch of Nazis

seem as authentic as possible, and they nailed it. The music, graphics, voices, and everything else combine perfectly, making it feel like you're playing through

THE OSS
The organization you work for in the game was created in 1942 as an intelligence gathering tool, and later went on to work with resistance groups in Nazi-occupied territory. Headed by William "Wild Bill" Donovan, the OSS recruited not only from the armed services of many countries, but among civilians as well. Although disbanded in 1945, many of its duties (and personnel) were taken over by the CIA

■ Taking on heavily fortified bunkers is quite the challenge, but at least they're not shooting bazookas at you yet — that's when things get a bit frustrating, one of the game's few faults

one of those classic WWII action movies, like *Guns of Navarone* or *Where Eagles Dare*.

The undercover missions in particular are a real treat, and very different for this kind of game (on a console, anyway). Since you're in disguise, you can walk right up to guards and fool them with a phony ID — and the sound of that clipped German accent barking, "Show me your papers!" is almost enough reason in and of itself to pick up this game. Of course, this just gives you the perfect opportunity to quickly pull a silenced pistol and cap them before they can react, which is a major thrill. Enemy AI is also interesting (not smarter or better, exactly, but interesting) in that enemies will do things like pick up your grenades and throw them back at you.

Little things keep the game from being perfect, though: there are some clipping

■ There's a nice mix of both large, open areas and tight quarters, and sometimes the fighting is pretty intense

problems, plus you can get stuck on the walls and, especially, ladders. Also, in later levels when the Nazis start shooting bazookas at you, it's all too common to poke your head around a corner and, "Bang! You're dead! Start the level over," which is every bit as aggravating as it sounds.   — *Jeff Lundrigan*

→NextGen ★★★★☆

Bottom Line: The best PlayStation first-person shooter in ages, *Medal of Honor* proves that few things are more satisfying than shooting a Nazi in the face

MTV Sports: Snowboarding

■ Publisher: **THQ** ■ Developer: **Radical Entertainment**

What's this? A good snowboarding game?

SCORE
800

■ With 46 individual tricks, and hundreds of possible combos, MTV Sports: Snowboarding will keep you occupied for hours

THQ has done its homework. Boarding games have long since moved beyond their humble beginnings as racing games with tricks thrown in, and MTV Sports: Snowboarding is a game that can stand up to the best of them.

Designed to mirror a snowboarding competition, the game limits your access to the later levels. In the beginning, you only have access to the training and qualifying rounds, which must be passed in order to move on to the competition. You'll race through the qualifying rounds all by your lonesome, but later levels will pit you against two other opponents — and they aren't pushovers.

The game's replay value is enhanced by the six different boarders. Each has a different set of characteristics and plays a

little differently. Once you've beaten the game once, that doesn't mean you can walk through it with another character. Other modes in the game include a Head-to-Head and Create-a-Park option. Playing against a live opponent is fun, but the split-screen view is just too small. Why the developers didn't include a full-screen two-player mode is a mystery.

And yes, the music is worth mentioning — the MTV license certainly didn't go to waste. The game features tunes from bands like Fear Factory, Lit, Primus, and others. The only downside is that developer Radical chose to record the tunes as yellow book CD-Redbook audio. This means that you can't use it in the player and rock on.

Army Men Air Attack

■ Platform: **PlayStation** ■ Publisher: **3DO** ■ Developer: **3DO**

The green plastic army marches (or rather, flies) on in this latest installment of 3DO's popular franchise. Perhaps "inspired" by EA's Strike series, the choppers in Air Attack come equipped with machine guns, rockets, and a winch that is used for both grabbing power-ups as well as hauling various objects around.

The game's best feature is the immersiveness of its environment, which is surprisingly organic: winching a discarded doughnut into an enemy camp causes ants to invade it and wreak havoc, for example. The 15 missions are fairly varied in both visual design and objectives, the

control is about as intuitive as you could ask for, and the two-player modes are, well, fun.

The down side is in its pacing, the radically varying level of difficulty, and the overall length. Although the control is responsive, the framerates aren't very impressive, and everything moves just a hair too slow to be exciting. Worse, we breezed through the first 10 or 11 missions in under two hours, until the last one or two levels proved
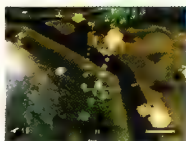
■ Army men take to the air — and move really, really slowly

all but impossible. This, plus the fact that the level layouts are relatively tiny, doesn't give it much replay value. — Jeff Lundrigan

NextGen ★★★☆☆

Bottom Line: It's got lots of cool ideas and good looks. All it needs is more levels, better gameplay balance, and a faster pace.

Ballistic

■ Platform: **PlayStation** ■ Publisher: **Infogrames** ■ Developer: **Mitchell Corporation**

It takes a lot of cajones to try and develop an action puzzle game these days. Number one, it's virtually impossible to top the prototype that started it all, Tetris, and two, there aren't many new wrinkles that are both intuitive enough for someone to catch on to quickly, yet offer enough depth to keep them coming back.

Ballistic actually combines elements of two other already successful puzzlers: Bust A Move and Puyo Puyo. A string of colored balls slowly move inward along a spiral path. You play by shooting additional colored balls into the spiral, and

if three or more of the same color fall consecutively, they disappear (much like Bust A Move) and the string collapses together to fill the gap — should this, in turn, cause three or more balls of the same color to line up, these disappear, and so on. The goal, especially in two-player games, is to build up the string so that massive chain reactions can be set off (much like Puyo Puyo).

And it actually works. It takes a minute or two, but once you

■ Ballistic may not look familiar, but it plays familiar, and sometimes, that's plenty good enough

get it, it's as addictive as you could ask for. — Jeff Lundrigan

NextGen ★★★★☆

Bottom Line: OK, so it's an ultimately derivative action puzzler, but give it a shot and we guarantee you won't want to put it down.

Boombots

■ Platform: **PlayStation** ■ Publisher: **Southpeak Interactive** ■ Developer: **The Neverhood**

Imagine Power Stone ported to PlayStation, substitute "wacky" robots, then add Claymation cut scenes that tell no story and are only vaguely related to what's going on. Finally, take everything that was good about Power Stone and put it somewhere else.

That, in a nutshell, describes Boombots. Oh, and it's also frustrating as hell.

A "fighting" game, Boombots pits you against a series of enemy robots, but although the bots vary in appearance and speed, they're all equipped exactly the same: a guided missile, a homing missile, and a machine gun. Of these, only the homing missile is of much

use, since the machine gun does little damage and the guided missile requires you to stand still while you steer it.

Enemy AI seems to consist mostly of making them faster than you are and able to take more damage. The tiny, minimalist combat arenas present little room to move or much in the way of opportunities for strategy. The cut scenes (which probably took twice as much time and energy to produce as the actual gameplay) are typical Neverhood

■ Boombots goes to show why gaming systems are made from silicon, not clay

goofiness. Maybe you'll think they're funny, but certainly not enough to put up with everything else. — Jeff Lundrigan

NextGen ★☆☆☆☆

Bottom Line: Just stay away.

Cool Boarders 4

■ Platform: **PlayStation** ■ Publisher: **989 Studios** ■ Developer: **989 Studios**
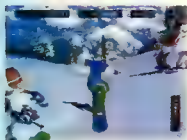
■ **It may not be the greatest, but it's not even PlayStation's greatest. Oh well**

It's a shame that 989 Studios spends so little time or effort on innovation for their sequels. From the utterly boring front end to the average graphics and strangely silent audio, *Cool Boarders 4* does little to warrant purchase.

The single biggest problem is with the questionable collision detection, which is especially nasty when passing between trees. Coming within a few feet of a tree will trigger the "oof" noise (the same sample is used for both the male and female riders) and slow you down, even when you've clearly got room to maneuver. Banging into one tree will often send you bouncing uncontrollably into the next, while the AI racers glide by, blissfully unconcerned with your fate. Crouching to gain speed is of little use, since it's almost impossible to catch up to the other riders once they've passed you. It seems a little easier to perform tricks this year, but the various grabs, spins, and flips don't really stand out from each other. With the lo-res graphics, it's hard to tell a tailgrab from an Indy or a Mute Grab.

Hopefully, next year will see a dramatic improvement after they spend some quality time with Activision's near-perfect *Tony Hawk*.   — Chris Kramer

▶ **Next**Gen ★★☆☆☆

Bottom line: *Cool Boarders* still lacks energy, and even Nintendo's three-year old *1080° Snowboarding* is a better game.

Killer Loop

■ Platform: **PlayStation** ■ Publisher: **Crave** ■ Developer: **VCC Entertainment**
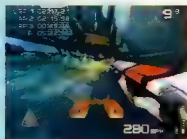
■ **No it's not *WipeOut 4* (it's not even *WipeOut 2*), it's *Killer Loop*. Yeah, it's confused us too...**

Rule of thumb: whenever a game is delivered to the office along with a sheet comparing it point for point with some other game, you can safely assume it will not be a "*Game X* Killer," but will instead be a blatant rip-off that's not nearly as good as the original. *Killer Loop* proves this rule rather nicely.

Aping the *WipeOut* series close enough to risk a lawsuit, *Killer Loop* does have a few points in its favor (especially given that *WipeOut 3* failed to outdo any previous entry in the series): It's colorful, and the tracks are fairly well designed. Beyond that, however, there's not much here. The handling is OK, but a little "floaty." The music is terrible, and the menu screens actually take a few minutes of thought to figure out. In Championship mode, you can't advance to the next class without placing first in every race — annoying. Even worse, while the tracks might be nice, there are only a half dozen of them, which you repeat over and over.   — Jeff Lundrigan

▶ **Next**Gen ★★☆☆☆

Bottom Line: Six tracks and six vehicles spread over four classes with no two-player mode — you do the math. Although a competent effort, this is the definition of a placeholder title, and you've seen it all before.

Knockout Kings 2000

■ Platform: **PlayStation** ■ Publisher: **EA Sports** ■ Developer: **Black Ops Entertainment**

■ *Knockout Kings* **is a decent boxing sim, but if you're looking for arcade action, you'll need to look elsewhere**

With the recent exception of *Ready 2 Rumble*, game platforms haven't seen much in the way of good boxing games in a long time. EA Sports aimed to change that with the original *Knockout Kings*. It didn't work. Now it's time for round two with *Knockout Kings 2000*.

A sport sim, this game is grounded in reality, with none of the arcade feel of *Ready 2 Rumble*. Instead *Knockout Kings 2000* presents the player with a slower, but more deliberate, match. You won't win a game here by button mashing. Fighting in *Knockout Kings 2000* actually takes a bit of skill. There are 25 featured fighters, including greats such as Muhammad Ali and Sugar Ray Leonard, and you can also create a custom boxer.

Although the game has a solid fighting engine, overall the whole thing oddly lacks polish. The character select screen has a distinct lag time as you flip from character to character, and during a match it is not unusual to witness a boxer moving partially through his opponent.   — Adam Pavlacka

▶ **Next**Gen ★★★☆☆

Bottom Line: *Knockout Kings 2000*'s biggest strength lies in its realism. The lack of arcade play is going to turn off a lot of potential fans.

■ PlayStation

The X-Files

■ Publisher: **Fox Inter.** ■ Developer: **Hyperbole Studios**

Maybe this should have been called *Fox Hunt*
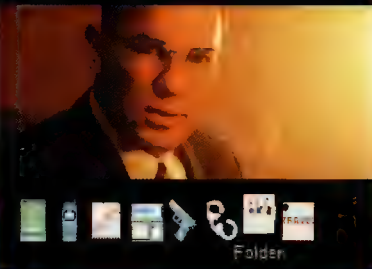
■ *The X-Files* should really have been titled *Adventures of Some FBI Guy You've Never Heard of*

For anyone who ▶ themselves pretty well. proved that FMV-based adventure games were Some of them, naturally, are better than others, but since death here comes *The X-Files*. It's got many of the none of them are outright is a far cry from the calling confusing productions that most games used to resemble. environmental puzzles, luminous "action" sequences, and a crushingly hand, could use some slow pace, but (gasp!) it has work. It follows FBI Agent one or two good points as well — not great points, Seattle office, trying to track mmm, you, but good.

For one thing, unlike who have disappeared. most of the FMV naturally, the game makes a monstrosities that plagued lot of twists and turns as gaming a few years back, friends turn out to be the acting in *The X-Files* enemies. It was obvious actually isn't bad. A few all together by folks who stars from the show make know the show, and it hits cameos here and there, the right atmosphere, but if including Mitch Pileggi you can't see the plot twists (Walter Skinner) and Steven coming, well, turn in your Williams (Mr. X — who's brain. Even so, the game been gone for a while now), David Duchovny and Gillian has a convenient option to spoon feed you clues if you get Anderson also put in an appearance for about ten stuck — which, given the creaky adventure-game seconds, but the main can is mechanics, you'll likely need.   — Jeff Lundrigan

▶ **Next**Gen ★★☆☆☆

Bottom Line: Although well produced and faithful to its source, *X-Files* just demonstrates that even the best FMV adventure games still aren't great games.

Track design is clever, and the graphics are whimsical — just about every recognizable element from the *Crash* universe appears somewhere in the game

■ PlayStation

Crash Team Racing

■ Publisher: **SCEA** ■ Developer: **Naughty Dog**

Naughty Dog delivers the best kart racer since 1992

The simple fact is, kart racing games haven't really progressed at all since Miyamoto released *Mario Kart* on Super NES. Until now.

This looks like a traditional kart game, but Naughty Dog has simultaneously stood the genre on its head and improved it immensely. Unlike other kart games, where staying on the track is everything, and one screw-up will cost you the race, in *CTR* staying on the track is easy, and maintaining a constant stream of turbos is essential to victory. You get turbos by hitting turbo pads, executing perfect powerslides, and getting air. There are multiple levels of turbo-charge, and while you'll probably beat the single-player mode in a couple of days, learning to maximize your turbos means you can continue to improve your times almost indefinitely, meaning the four-player mode should stay fun for months, if not years — we're talking *Bomberman* quality here.

Even right up against a wall (right), there is no "rez-out" of blocky graphics. The draw-in distance is also impressive (left) thanks to hand-tweaked levels

The graphics are also amazing, thanks to a radically improved engine, and even up close, walls and other objects don't get too pixelated. The lighting effects on the weapons are also top-of-the-line for PlayStation, although they're not up to PC quality.

As you'd expect, there is an Adventure mode, Time Trial, Versus, and Battle mode. The Battle mode has special tracks, tons of options, and is probably complete enough to stand out as a full game in its own right. We like the fact that most of the tracks are available immediately in Versus mode, even if you haven't unlocked them in the adventure — Rare could take a lesson from this. (Don't worry, though, there're plenty of other secrets hidden in the Adventure that make it worth playing through.)

Overall, this is a stunning achievement: it looks great, it advances the genre by changing (and we'd argue improving) the challenge, and it's about the best four-player game on PlayStation. Oh yeah, and the AI doesn't cheat. — *Chris Charla*

WHAT'S NEXT FOR CRASH?

Although *Crash* has become synonymous with developer Naughty Dog, this is the last time the team will work with the bandicoot it helped create (which is owned by Universal Interactive, and under long-term lease to Sony). The next *Crash* will be for PlayStation1 from UK developer Eurocom. As for Naughty Dog, the team is at work on a hush-hush, genre-breaking PS2 project. Don't expect it anytime soon though — flush with *Crash* royalties, the team doesn't plan to release anything that isn't a gaming "masterpiece," according to a source at Naughty Dog.

If you don't have one, buy a multitap: four-player Battle mode is amazing

■NextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: Naughty Dog's best effort to date, this brilliant kart racer is both a technological and gameplay milestone

SuperCross Circuit

■ Platform: **PlayStation** ■ Publisher: **989 Studios** ■ Developer: **Idol Minds**
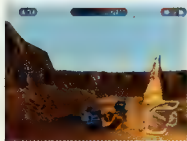
■ **SuperCross is definitely worth your time until something better comes along**

SuperCross Circuit is 989 Studios' latest racing title, and, although the control and animation are a little loose, the developers have managed to pack enough motocross action on this disc to justify giving it a spin. There's an Arcade mode, a lengthy Career mode, Quasi-

RPG mode, a free-ride Stunt mode, a Two-Player season, a Time Trial mode, and (nice touch here) even a track editor.

The core of the game is the Career mode, in which you compete against seven other real-life BMX experts. Aside from having to negotiate turns, knowing when to gun your engines before hitting a ramp and avoiding fallen riders, you're also responsible for the maintenance of your bike. Proper configuration

of shocks, engine balance, tires, and brakes is necessary to have a viable shot at winning the current course. Your bike's components also degrade over time, so extra cash must always be on hand for a new set of tires or an engine overhaul. The tracks themselves range from rock quarries to indoor arenas, and the possible mid-air tricks and combos will keep you busy almost as much in the sky as on the ground. — *Doug Trueman*

→ **Next**Gen ★★★☆☆

Bottom Line: There's more than enough in this title to engross even the most cynical racing fan until the first 128-bit motocross game is released.

Thrasher: Skate and Destroy

■ Platform: **PlayStation** ■ Publisher: **Rockstar Games** ■ Developer: **Z-Axis**
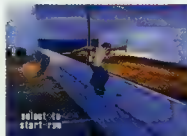
■ **Thrasher attempts to re-create the skating experience, but fails way short of the mark**

The idea here was to make a skating sim — you need to learn new tricks, and do difficult combos to pull off the best ones. While there are plenty of moves to learn and you have almost unprecedented control over them, they do you

absolutely no good when they must be accessed by the unresponsive controls. The gameplay is also really slow, failing to capture the speed of the sport, and the difficulty ramp means it will take you hours to even pull off a simple maneuver (except for railslides). This may be realistic, but it isn't fun. In fact, the game even punishes experimentation — hit the buttons wrong and you'll just fly off your board. If playing *Thrasher* were anything like real skating,

the X Games would end early because everybody would be horribly crippled after attempting their first tricks.

Further pulling the game down is an uninspired first-generation PlayStation look and some mismatched music (how many skaters today really skate to songs like "White Lines" and "Rapper's Delight"?). Ultimately, the game fails because it doesn't re-create the feel of skateboarding or make it fun. Without that, what's the point? — *Blake Fischer*

→ **Next**Gen ★★☆☆☆

Bottom line: A sim that's tedious, not fun.

Vandal Hearts 2: Heavenly Gate

■ Platform: **PlayStation** ■ Publisher: **Konami** ■ Developer: **Konami**

■ **For those up to the challenge, Vandal Hearts 2 is well worth the effort**

Vandal Hearts 2 follows much in the same fashion as its original: it's graphically underwhelming, but it packs in the challenging and engrossing gameplay.

While the storyline of a young boy who fights an evil empire may not be so different

from those found in most other strategy RPGs, it's the *way* in which the story is told that really draws the player in deep. And in *VH2*'s favor, the themes of class war, political strife, and forbidden love mostly ring true.

But the battle engine is what really makes or breaks a strategy RPG, and the one found in *VH2* is a mixed bag. Featuring an innovative "dual-turn" system that allows enemies to move across

the battlefield at the same time as your party, combat is tough and relies on your ability to closely predict the enemy's behavior. While this is a bold step forward, the system does make battles overly drawn out and often more frustrating than they need be. But the inclusion of an item system that levels up with characters in battle, imbuing them with special attacks, adds a welcome amount of complexity. — *Francesca Reyes*

→ **Next**Gen ★★★☆☆

Bottom Line: With its steep learning curve, *VH2* may not be ideal for novices, but because it has a strong story and clever battle features, it proves to be a great challenge for veterans.

V-Rally 2

■ Publisher: **EA** ■ Developer: **Infogrames**

Here's one game that really makes tracks

■ **There's some very nice scenery if you get the chance to take a look**

→ Offering both arcade racing against three other cars, and the more realistic simulation of racing alone for the lowest overall time, *V-Rally 2* attempts to include rally driving to suit every racer's taste. With its 84 (count 'em) separate stages held in 12 different countries, terrain variation is impressive and has a real effect on car handling: ignore the car setup screens at your peril. The 16 cars available at startup are faithful re-creations of their real-life WRC equivalents, and the genuine sampled sounds do much to capture the excitement of driving these powerful machines.

Happily, it's entirely possible to temporarily leave the main route without running into the dreaded invisible wall, but just like last year's game, it's way too easy to turn the cars over. Even the tiniest roadside bump is capable of launching you into the air and the subsequent recovery will see you not

only lose your place but, in Trophy mode, make a comeback virtually impossible. Worse, the unbalanced difficulty levels mean that you're more likely to succeed in Championship mode than when going for a trophy, making unlocking the 10 hidden cars more of a challenge than it should be. Still, the game has a few outstanding features: cars take real-time damage, for one, and between stages you have limited repair time to fix yourself up, encouraging more skillful driving to keep in contention. Also, the included track editor practically guarantees extended replay time. You have control over everything from track elevation to prevailing weather conditions over each section: a huge bonus for serious race fans. And that may be enough for you to forgive the game its faults and take it out for a spin. — *Max Everingham*

→ **Next**Gen ★★★☆☆

Bottom Line: It looks good, it plays fine, and it has a lot of tracks. Only a few annoying quirks keep it from really flying.

Freespace 2

■ Publisher: **Interplay** ■ Developer: **Volition**

Boldly going where no space game has gone before

■ If you've got the killer gaming hardware, *Freespace 2* will push it hard, but the reward is visuals that are second to none.

THE DESCENT CONNECTION

Developers Outrage (*Descent 3*) and Volition (*Freespace 2*) are the two halves of what was originally Parallax, the company that made *Descent 1* and 2. Part of the deal with the split is that the *Descent* license will alternate between the two.

■ While the Human Vasudan alliance may have a super-powered capital ship that is gigantic, unfortunately so do the bad guys, the Shivans

With *Freespace: The Great War*, Volition showed it was more than ready to take on the *Wing Commander* series with a game that featured incredible graphics, a great storyline, and some of the best space action anywhere. And you'll be glad to know that this time around Volition has upped the ante even more and built the best playing and looking space combat game ever.

Picking up 20 years after the first game, you start as the typical no-name pilot making his way in the world. Where this differs from, say, *Wing Commander*, is that you're not a hotshot taking out the entire enemy fleet by yourself. As part of a wing, you must use your co-pilots (who actually have decent AI) to cover certain ships or help you take out targets. The wingmen provide a lot of the storyline through their interaction and chatter (with excellent voice acting). As you progress you'll hook up with new squadrons, different fighters, and a wide variety of missions, so the game never stagnates.

Graphically, this is second to none. Huge capital ships (and we mean *huge!*) dwarf your fighters, and when they engage in combat around you it's like flying against the Death Star. Even better, many of them now have giant beam weapons for anti-fighter coverage or simply to cut through other ships. You haven't seen spectacle until you see a six-kilometer-long cruiser fly into battle against enemy forces. If the action wasn't so intense, it'd be entertaining to just sit back and watch. This isn't a short game either — expect many hours of conflict and plot twists. Even after you beat the game, some nifty multiplayer options keep you coming back.

Attention has been paid to every single detail, and there is no weak link, from the storyline to the awesome sound to the control to the graphics. In fact, we'd have to say that the game's only quirk is its huge install size (over one gig!). — *Blake Fischer*

⮀ NextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: No self-respecting space-combat junkie should live without it.

■ PC

Septerra Core

■ Publisher: **Monolith** ■ Developer: **Valkyrie**

A little anime flavor goes a long way — like anchovy paste

Computers rule, baby. The Core in *Septerra Core* is a huge living computer, dispenser of all energy, around which revolve seven floating continents, rotating one above the other.

You are Maya, a blue-haired junk scavenger on the second-world level of this RPG, living on scraps and castoff machinery dumped by a powerful and greedy people, the Chosen, who live extravagantly on the level above you.

Life could go on pleasantly with you picking through trash and using spells and weapons to fight various monsters to the death, but the Chosen, led by a militaristic ninny, have decided to disrupt your

hand-to-mouth existence and fight their way to the inner core. There they hope to confront the computer and unlock the secrets of the Creator, dormant for eons.

Septerra Core is a well-crafted, good-looking, heavily anime-influenced game with some interesting character quirks (not everybody in your party automatically gets along), but you'll have to endure some really lousy voice acting, which sounds like a classroom full of beginning drama students. If you can ignore the theatrics, the plot unfolds in a timely fashion, with a good mix of action, quests, and puzzle-solving, and a few surprises along the way. — *John Lee*

■ Fights and magic spells can be very colorful on your way to the Core

■**Next**Gen ★★★★☆

Bottom Line: You don't see many console-style RPGs on PC, but *Septerra Core* should make you look.

Silver

■ Platform: **PC** ■ Publisher: **Infogrames** ■ Developer: **Infogrames**

Ah, maidens in distress. Just the thing for long winter nights. *Silver* is a stirring action/adventure tale in the mold of a console-style RPG that starts strong and runs deep. The evil sorcerer of the title, Silver, seems to be a roué, having ordered his henchmen to kidnap all the women of Jarrah. The old magician says it's part of a pact with the god Apocalypse. Yeah. Sure. Dirty old man.

You play David, a promising young knight who lives near Jarrah, whose wife is among the kidnapped. That's no good, so David sets out with his grandfather to rescue the women and rid the land of Silver forever.

Then it's explore, cut-and-slash, and explore some more. Every level is stocked with monsters, and the only way to move on is to kill them. The simple combat system takes place in realtime, and it works fine when it's just David and his granddad. As the party grows, however, the good guys get either bunched up in combat, or hard to control. Although not to worry — like the console RPGs it's modeled after, anyone who dies comes back to life after the battle.

Silver has its charm. You get
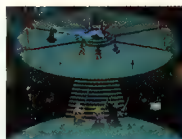
■ Monsters are tough in *Silver*, but evil magic can be just as deadly

pleasant music and good voice acting, with nicely detailed graphics and an interesting cast of characters. — *John Lee*

■**Next**Gen ★★★☆☆

Bottom Line: A good way to spend a promising (k)night.

Deer Avenger 2: Deer in the City

■ Platform: **PC/Mac** ■ Publisher: **Simon & Schuster** ■ Developer: **Hypnotix**

The original *Deer Avenger* spoofed *Deer Hunter* and other games of its ilk that let you snipe away at defenseless wildlife by letting the deer turn the tables and hunt rednecks. Predictably, this brought howls of outrage from hunters and sports writers that had little to do with its relative merits as a game (which, we admit, were few). Their humor-impaired ravings somehow rankled the *Deer Avenger* team, though, since this time it comes festooned with disclaimers about it being "just a game," and uses tranquilizer guns instead of blow-'em-away hard stuff. Sigh.

Also, this time you shoot at office workers, neighborhood

denizens, and bar patrons, which kind of kills the joke. The game is set up like a shooting gallery: you pan right or left, aiming with your mouse, while humans pop up and run to and fro through the scenery. But unlike the *Deer Hunter* games it spoofs, the hunted shoot back.

There are jokes and surprises galore, but after you've tranquilized your way through three locations, you're just about done. There are no hidden levels, and no secret weapons to

■ No sylvan woods here — blast away in offices, bars, and suburban neighborhoods

unlock. About all that's left is to really do after that is keep shooting and watch your score climb. — *John Lee*

■**Next**Gen ★★☆☆☆

Bottom Line: *Deer Avenger 2* is woefully short on gameplay, no question, but at least it's good for chuckles. Unless, of course, you're a hunter or a sports writer.

Nocturne

■ Platform: **PC** ■ Publisher: **Gathering of Developers** ■ Developer: **Terminal Reality**

Nocturne wants to be *Resident Evil* really badly. It isn't. A collection of four different action/adventures, *Nocturne* follows "Stranger," a trenchcoat-and-sunglasses-clad anti-hero who hunts down supernatural beasties with his two blazing handguns. And, unfortunately, the gameplay is as tired as the clichéd character it features.

In its attempt at spookiness, the graphics are practically all different shades of gray, but it does look good, except for the stiff character animation (oddly though, their coats and cloaks billow impressively — some 3D animator must have gotten a new plug-in for Christmas). The

gameplay, however, consists entirely of the "find the item, open the door" style of puzzle you've played a thousand times. During the item hunting, Stranger gets jumped by all kinds of monsters, which is actually more annoying than challenging. One or two beasties would suffice, but the game often throws them at you eight at a time, giving you no room to move. So you stand there, guns blazing, until they keel over. Otherwise, the pace is pretty slow — even the
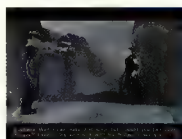
■ Shoot a few zombies, find a few keys, open a few doors — that's about all there is to *Nocturne*

voice acting just drones on and on — but rarely builds to any kind of tension. — *Jeff Lundrigan*

■**Next**Gen ★★☆☆☆

Bottom Line: *Nocturne* isn't terrible, but neither is it especially terrifying.

➡ **Gamer's** Guide

What's black and white and not nearly as red as you'd think?

➡ Welcome to the Gamer's Guide, your insanely popular resource to what's worth buying and what's not even worth a glance. Each month, we update the list with every game we've reviewed since the last

time, and cull out older stuff. Which older stuff? Well, mostly bad PC games, but a few first-generation console titles, too. We leave in just about every title that ever got ★★★★★ though, since they're almost always a good

bet, no matter old they get. (Although it is worth taking note of which issue it was reviewed in, since time and technology march on, and a game that scored ★★★★ a couple of years ago might only score ★★★ today.)

title	publisher	rating	#
Dreamcast			
Blue Stinger	ActiVision	★★★	1/99
Dynamite Deka 2	Sega (Japan)	★★★	09/99
Expendable	Rage (Japan)	★	09/99
Flag to Flag CART Racing	Sega	★★★	10/99
Frame Gride	From Software (Japan)	★★★	10/99
House of the Dead 2	Sega	★★	09/99
Hydro Thunder	Midway	★★★★	10/99
King of Fighters	SNK (Japan)	★★	11/99
Monaco GP	Ubi Soft	★★★	11/99
Mortal Kombat Gold	Midway	★★	10/99
NFL Blitz 2000	Acclaim	★★★	1/99
Pen Pen Tricelon	Infogrames	★★	12/99
Power Stone	Midway	★★★★★	09/99
Ready 2 Rumble	Midway	★★★★	1/99
Sega Bass Fishing	Sega	★★★★	09/99
Sega Sports NFL 2K	Sega	★★★★	10/99
Sonic Adventure	Sega	★★★★	10/99
Soul Calibur	Namco	★★★★★	1/99
Suzuki Alstare Extreme Racing	Ubi Soft	★	12/99
TNN Motorsports Hardcore Heat	ASC Games	★★	12/99
Tokyo Xtreme Racing	Crave	★★★	09/99
Toy Commander	Sega	★★★★	12/99
TrickStyle	Acclaim	★★	1/99
Virtua Fighter 3tb	Sega	★★★★	2/99

title	publisher	rating	#
Nintendo 64			
1080 Snowboarding	Nintendo	★★★★★	42
A Bug's Life	Activision	★	09/99
Aero Gauge	Ascii	★★★	39
All Star Baseball '99	Acclaim	★★★★	43
All Star Baseball 2000	Acclaim	★★★★	55
All Star Tennis '99	Ubi Soft	★	10/99
Army Men, Sarge's Heroes	3DO	★★★	52
Automobili Lamborghini 64	Titus	★★	37
Banjo-Kazooie	Nintendo	★★★★	43
Battletanx	3DO	★★★★	5.
Battletanx Global Assault	3DO	★★★	12/99
Beetle Adventure Racing	Electronic Arts	★★★★	53
Blast Corps	Nintendo	★★★★	31
Body Harvest	Midway	★★★★	48
Buck Bumble	Ubi Soft	★★★	48
Castlevania	Konami	★★★	51
Clay Fighter 63 1/3	Interplay	★	36
Cruisin' USA	Nintendo	★	26
Cruisin' World	Midway	★★	48
Dark Rift	Vic Tokai	★★★	31
Deadly Arts	Konami	★	47
Diddy Kong Racing	Nintendo	★★★★	37
Donkey Kong 64	Nintendo	★★★★	12/99
Doom 64	Williams	★★★	29
Duke Nukem 64	GT interactive	★★	47
Duke Nukem Zero Hour	GT interactive	★	09/99
Extreme-G	Acclaim	★★★★	37
F-Zero X	Nintendo	★★★★★	5*
HF1 Pole Position 64	Ubi Soft	★★★	36
FIFA Road to the World Cup 64	Electronic Arts	★★★★	⬛
FIFA Soccer 64	Electronic Arts	★★	30
Fighter's Destiny	Ocean	★★★★	41
Forsaken	Acclaim	★★★	43
Glover	Hasbro Interactive	★★	⬛
Goemon's Great Adventure	Konami	★★★	53
GoldenEye 007	Nintendo	★★★★★	34
GT 64	Infogrames	★	47
Hexen	GT Interactive	★★	32
Hot Wheels Turbo Racing	Electronic Arts	★★★★	53
International Superstar Soccer	Konami	★★★★★	32
International Superstar Soccer 98	Konami	★★★★	44
Jet Force Gemini	Nintendo	★★★	11/99
Ken Griffey Jr's Slugfest	Nintendo	★★★★	56
Killer Instinct Gold	Nintendo	★★	26
Mace The Dark Age	Midway	★★	37
Madden 64	Electronic Arts	★★	37
Mario Kart 64	Nintendo	★★★	30
Mike Piazza's Strike Zone	GT Interactive	★	44
Mission Impossible	Ocean	★★★	43
Monaco GP Racing Simulation 2	Ubi Soft	★★★★	55
Monster Truck Madness 64	Rockstar	★	11/99
Mortal Kombat 4	Midway	★★★★	46
Multi Racing Championship	Ocean	★★★★	33
Mystical Ninja	Konami	★★★★	45
NBA Hangtime	Williams	★★	29
NBA In the Zone 64	Konami	★	4
NHL Breakaway 99	Acclaim	★★	50
Nightmare Creatures	ActiVision	★★★	50
Olympic Hockey '98	Midway	★★	28
PilotWings 64	Nintendo	★★★★	21
QBC 64	Acclaim	★★★	37
Quake II	Activision	★★★★	10/99
Quake 64	Midway	★★★	44
Quest 64	THQ	★★★	43
Rainbow Six	Red Storm Ent.	★★★	12/99
Rampage World Tour	Midway	★★	47
Resident Evil 2	Capcom	★★★★	12/99
Robotron 64	Crave Entertainment	★★★	39
Rocket: The Robot on Wheels	Ubi Soft	★★★	2/99
Rush 2 Extreme Racing USA	Midway	★★★★	49
S.C.A.R.S.	Ubi Soft	★★★	⬛⬛
San Francisco Rush	Midway Home	★★★★★	36
Shadowgate 64	Kemco	★★	10/99
Shadowman	Acclaim	★★	11/99
Shadows of the Empire	Nintendo	★★	26
Snowboard Kids	Atlus Software	★★★	40
Space Station: Silicon Valley	next 2	★★★★★	49
StarFox 64	Nintendo of America	★★★★	32
Star Wars Episode I Racer	Nintendo	★★★	55
Super Mario 64	Nintendo	★★★★★	21
Superman	Titus	★	10/99
Tetrisphere	Nintendo	★★★	35
Tonic Trouble	Ubi Soft	★★★	10/99
Top Gear Rally	Midway	★★★★	37
Turok: Dinosaur Hunter	Acclaim	★★★	28
Turok 2: Seeds of Evil	Acclaim	★★★★★	47
Vigilante 8	interplay	★★★★	53
Virtual Chess 64	Titus	★★★	47
War Gods	Midway	★	31
WaveRace 64	Nintendo	★★★★★	25
Wayne Gretzky's 3D Hockey	Midway	★★★	29
Wayne Gretzky's 3D Hockey '98	Midway	★	39
WCW Mayhem	EA	★	12/99
WCW/NWO Revenge	THQ	★★★★	48
Wetrix	Ocean	★★★	44
Wipeout 64	Psygnosis/Midway	★★★★	48
World Driver Championship	Midway	★★★★	09/99
Wrestlemania 2000	THQ	★★★★	2/99
WWF Attitude	Acclaim	★★	1/99
Yoshi's Story	Nintendo	★★	41
Yuke Yuke Troublemakers	Enix	★★★	34
Zelda: Ocarina of Time	Nintendo	★★★★★	48

title	publisher	rating	#
PlayStation			
XTreme	989 Studios	★	55
Abe's Oddysee	GT Interactive	★★★★	15
Ace Combat 2	Namco	★★★★	15
Akuji the Heartless	Eidos	★★★	47
Alexi Lalas International Soccer	Take 2	★★★	56
Alundra	Working Designs	★★★★	38
Ape Escape	SCEA	★★★★	56
Apocalypse	Activision	★★	50
Area 51	Midway	★★	27
Armored Core	SCEA	★★★★	37
Armored Core Project Phantasma	Ascii	★★★★	48
Azan Collection One, The	Midway	★★★★	27
Auto Destruct	Electronic Arts	★★★	39
Azure Dreams	Konami	★★	44
BallBlazer Champions	LucasArts	★★★	31
Batman and Robin	Acclaim	★★	47
Battlestations	Electronic Arts	★★	31
Back Dawn	Virgin	★★★★	23
Blast Radius	Psygnosis	★	53
Blasto	SCEA	★★	42
Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain	Activision	★★★★	24
Bloody Roar	SCEA	★★★★	41
Bloody Roar 2	SCEA	★★★	56
Bogey Dead 6	SCEA	★★★	22
Bomberman Fantasy Racing	Atlus	★★★	52
BRAHMA Force	Jaleco	★★	34
Brave Fencer Musashi	Square Electronic Arts	★★★	49
Bravo Air Race	THQ	★★★	34
Breath of Fire III	Capcom	★★★★	41
Broken Helix	Konami	★★★	32
Brunswick Circuit Pro Bowling	THQ	★★★★	48
Bubsy 3D	Accolade	★★	26
Bug Riders	GT Interactive	★★	37
Burning Road	Playmates	★★★	27
Bushido Blade	Sony	★★★★★	3
Bushido Blade 2	Square EA	★★★★★	49
Bust-A-Groove	989 Studios	★★★★	50
Bust-a-Move	Enix	★★★★	4.
Bust-a-Move 2	Enix	★★★★	55
Buster Bros Collection	Capcom	★★★	30
Cardinal SYN	SCEA	★★★	43
Carnage Heart	SCEA	★★★★	28
Castlevania: Symphony of the Night	Konami	★★★★	36
Castrol Honda Superbike Racing	Electronic Arts	★★★	09/99
Centipede	Hasbro,Atari	★★★	09/99
Championship Motocross	THQ	★★★★	10/99
Chocobo Racing	Square EA	★★	10/99
Circuit Breakers	Mindscape	★★★★	45
Civilization II	Activision	★★★★★	52
Clock Tower	Ascii	★★★★	47
Codename Tenka	Psygnosis	★★	28
Colony Wars	Psygnosis	★★★★★	38
Contender	SCEA	★	52
Contra: Legacy of War	Konami	★★★	25
Cool Boarders	SCEA	★★★	27
Cool Boarders 2	SCEA	★★★	37
Courier Crisis	GT Interactive	★	37
Crash 2: Cortex Strikes Back	SCEA	★★★★	37
Crash Bandicoot	SCEA	★★★	23

Crash Bandicoot: Warped	SCEA	★★★	49
Croc: the Legend of the Gobbos	Fox Interactive	★★★	35
Croc 2	Fox Interactive	★★★★	56
Crow City of Angels, The	Acclaim	★	30
Crusader: No Remorse	Origin	★★★★	29
Dark Forces	LucasArts	★★★★	26
Dark Omen	Electronic Arts	★★★	43
Darklight Conflict	Electronic Arts	★★	34
Dead In the Water	ASC	★★	52
Dead or Alive	Tecmo	★★★★	37
Deathtrap Dungeon	Eidos	★	42
Deception	Tecmo	★★★	24
Demolition Racer	Infogrames	★	1/99
Descent Maximum	Interplay	★★★	29
Devil Dice	THQ	★★★★	47
Diablo	Electronic Arts	★★★★	42
Die Hard Trilogy	Fox Interactive	★★★★	23
Dino Crisis	Capcom	★★★★★	0.99
Disney's Hercules	Virgin Interactive	★★	34
Dragon Ball GT Final Bout	Bandai	★	39
Dragonseeds	Jaleco	★★	48
Driver	GT interactive	★★★★	09/99
Dynasty Warriors	KOEI	★★★★	32
Duke Nukem Time to Kill	GT interactive	★★★★	48
Einhander	SCEA	★★★★	40
Ehrgeiz	Square EA	★★★	55
Fantastic 4	Acclaim	★	35
Felony 11-79	Ascii	★★★	34
FIFA '97	Electronic Arts	★	26
Fighting Force	Eidos	★★★	37
Final Doom	Williams	★★★	24
Final Fantasy Tactics	SCEA	★★★★	40
Final Fantasy VII	SCEA	★★★★★	34
Final Fantasy VIII	Square EA	★★★★	10/99
Forsaken	Acclaim	★★★	43
Frank Thomas Baseball	Acclaim	★★	32
Frogger	Hasbro Interactive	★	37
G Darius	THQ	★★★	46
G Police: Weapons of Justice	Psygnosis	★	09/99
GameDay '97	Sony	★★★★★	27
Gex: Enter the Gecko	Crystal Dynamics	★★★	42
Ghost in the Shell	THQ	★★★	35
Goal Storm '97	Konami	★★★★	30
Grandstream Saga	THQ	★★	44
Gran Turismo	SCEA	★★★★★	40
Grand Slam	Virgin	★★	31
Grand Theft Auto: London 1969	Rockstar	★★★	56
Grand Tour Racing '98	Activision	★★★	36
Granola	SCEA	★★★★	12/99
Guardian's Crusade	ActiVision	★★★★	52
Heart of Darkness	Interplay	★★	47
Herc's Adventures	SCEA	★★★	35
Hot Shots Golf	SCE	★★★★	41
In the Zone 2	Konami	★★★★	26
In the Zone 99	Konami	★★	53
Independence Day	Fox	★★	29
Invasion from Beyond	GT Interactive	★★	53
Jade Cocoon	Crave	★★	09/99
Jersey Devil	MegaToon	★★★	44
Jet Moto	SCEA	★★★★	27
Jet Moto 2	SCEA	★★★	37
Jet Moto 3	989 Studios	★★★★	1/99
Judge Dredd	Activision	★	42
Juggernaut	Jaleco	★★★	11/99
Jumping Flash!	SCEA	★★★★★	0.6
Jumping Flash! 2	SCEA	★★★★	20
K-1 The Arena Fighters	THQ	★★	30
Kartia	Atlus	★★★★	45
Knockout Kings	EA Sports	★★	49
Konami Arcade Classics	Konami	★★★	09/99
League of Pain	Psygnosis	★★★	30
Legacy of Kain Soul Reaver	Crystal Dynamics	★★★★	10/99
Lode Runner	Natsume	★★★	39
Lost World: Jurassic Park, The	Electronic Arts	★★★	34
Lunar Silver Star Story Complete	Working Designs	★★★	55
Machine Hunter	MGM interactive	★	34
Madden '97	EA Sports	★★★★	24
Madden '98	Electronic Arts	★★★	35
Madden '99	Electronic Arts	★★	47
Madden 2000	EA Sports	★★★	1./99
March Madness '98	Electronic Arts	★★	42
MechWarrior 2	Activision	★★★★	31
Medievil	SCEA	★★★	48
Mega Man X 4	Capcom	★★★	36
MegaMan 8	Capcom	★★★	29
MegaMan Legends	Capcom	★★★	47
Metal Gear Solid	Konami	★★★★★	48
Micro Machines V3	Midway	★★★★	39
Midway Collection 2, The	Midway	★★★★	38
MLB '99	SCEA	★★★★	46
MLB 2000	989 Studios	★★★	55
Monster Rancher	Tecmo	★★★★★	38
Mortal Kombat 4	Midway	★★★	46
Mortal Kombat Mythologies	Midway	★	⬛
Moto Racer	Electronic Arts	★★★★★	36
Moto Racer 2	Electronic Arts	★★★★	48
Motor Toon Grand Prix	SCEA	★★★★	26
N2O	Fox	★★★	45
Nagano Winter Olympics 98	Konami	★★★	39

IF e-ADVERTISING IS ART, THE WORLD IS BADLY IN NEED OF PAINTERS.

Mail bashing ramblings of the Next Gen reader

➡️ I've been a loyal reader since **NG 01**, and until recently I agreed with the contention that Shigeru Miyamoto was the be-all and end-all of game design. Well certainly, Miyamoto is a Hall-of-Famer of game design, creating some of the most memorable characters in games history. Anybody would be hard-pressed to find a game that ranks higher than any *Zelda, Mario,* or *Donkey Kong* title, on any system (*Mario 64* was a bit overrated, but that's just me).

But when you weigh those titles against those of Yu Suzuki, they sadly just don't stack up. The most comprehensive, realistic, fighting game in history? *Virtua Fighter.* The best racing games? *Daytona 2* and *F355 Challenge.* The most ambitious RPG-adventure game to date? *Shenmue.* And when you add to that list instant classics like *Space Harrier, Outrun,* the first *Daytona,* and the genre-busting revolutionary 3D fighter *Virtua Fighter 1,* it becomes painfully obvious that Miyamoto is a very, very close 2nd to the always innovative, revolutionary Yu Suzuki.

vivace6@pop.gateway.net

Damn — fighting words from Vivace6. We'll say this: we can't give Suzuki credit for Shenmue until it ships and succeeds — Blasto! was ambitious too, but that didn't make it good. Here at Next Gen, we can only agree on one thing: if we don't think Miyamoto is #1, then we all think he's #2. So, one editor thinks it's Meier then Miyamoto, one gives it to Lebling then Miyamoto, one to Kojima then Miyamoto. Start to see a pattern? If Miyamoto is number two on a lot of lists where number one keeps changing, it's easy to see where the idea of Miyamoto as the one #1 that everyone can agree on comes from.

➡️ Ever since Sega made the announcement that it would develop a new system, I have seen letters from people asking if you think Sega will last, if the game developers will climb aboard, and if the system will last. Even in your last issue there were the same questions. Well, what I say to all those "wait and see" people is: QUIT WAITING. If everyone waits to see if it is going to succeed, it won't. If nobody buys the console because they are afraid that developers aren't going to be on board, then there won't be any. Buy the system. It is great. The more of us who buy Dreamcasts, the better. Why do you think that every game designer in the known world wants to develop for PlayStation? Could it be the 60 million units sold? If there were even a quarter of that many Dreamcasts sold, there would be as many developers as there are for PSX. So quit waiting and wondering and just buy the Dreamcast. If you are afraid that once PS2 arrives, DC will go by the wayside, just stop and ask yourself this: How many people are going to shell out almost $400 and still not even have a game to play on that new system?

leeall@aol.com

Hmm... we like this logic. Look, if everyone just read Next Generation, there would be no need for them to read any other magazines. So, please, just read Next Generation.

➡️ I read your article but was a little confused with your description of Sony's Internet strategy. It said PS2 will have an expansion set that includes Ethernet and a hard drive for use with cable modems. The article implies that it won't be usable with DSL. But the interface for DSL (at least mine anyway) is Ethernet. I thought this was pretty standard. Is there some reason that Sony's Ethernet solution won't work with DSL?

Carl Tanner
carlt2@hotmail.com

Only that the Sony execs we spoke to seemed very up on cable and very down on DSL. While they conceded that DSL could be used with the system, it seems clear that Sony's strategy will be to pursue cable.

And don't forget, this isn't a PC. Unless Sony (or an approved third party) wants it to happen, and writes drivers for it, there won't be DSL on PS2 — it's not like consumers will simply be able to choose to do it themselves.

Girl trouble?

I've subscribed to **Next Gen** for a while now, and I have a large problem with the magazine that bothers me more and more – the types of pictures you put on the cover. From **NG 55** to the **11/99** magazine, out of those seven magazines, five of them have had some girl on the cover, wearing whatever it is that would attract male attention. I know they must bring in some of the audience, but how much of your audience are they turning off? I may be a 16-year-old-boy, but I know I don't like to read magazines that use these girls on the cover just to attract a buying audience. No quality magazine should need to paste girls to the cover to sell. I find it insulting and somewhat embarrassing that I am getting a magazine in the mail that almost always has some girl on the cover.

hartfan12@hotmail.com

What's the matter, afraid of cooties? Since NG 53 (the Dreamcast issue), we have had four men, five women, one monster of indeterminate gender, and five consoles on our covers. Yes, whenever possible we use high-quality CG renders of individual characters, since it's visually striking and helps set Next Gen apart at the newsstand. Frequently those renders are of women (if you think about it, if they weren't of women at least half the time, that would be even stranger, wouldn't it?). Are these characters, in general, attractive? Of course. OK, one hideous monster for contrast, but after all, who wants to put ugly people on a cover? And it's not like we're alone — Entertainment Weekly, Spin, Premiere, in fact just about any entertainment magazine puts good-looking women on its cover more than half the time. Women appeal more to men (and women) than men do. It's a fact of life. Deal with it.

■ So we put attractive women on our covers. So do a lot of magazines. Why would anyone have a problem with that?

> **Buy the system. It is great. The more of us who buy Dreamcasts, the better. So quit waiting and wondering and just buy...**

One of the specs you gave for the chipset doesn't sound very powerful at all. 15 polygons/sec?

→ You guys need to stop referring to 12-year-olds as immature little brats. I am 12, and I'm a hardcore gamer. Now I bet you are saying "Yeah, sure, he probably owns about three games." That is not true. I own N64, PlayStation, and Dreamcast. I also have a P3 600 with a G400. I also buy all and I mean ALL games that you give a five-star rating and some that you gave four stars. I own no one- to three-star games. I hated *Kingpin*. It sucked. After the 40th utterance of the word "fuck" or "motherfucker," I was already bored. How long did the damn thing have to load!? Remember the "Hardcore Gamer Test?" I scored **Next Gen** level, and I would have scored "Sad" if I had a car and a job. So the next time you feel the need to address 12-year-old gamers as immature, refer back to this letter. Thank you for your time.
OBanarchy@aol.com

Are you sure you're writing to the correct magazine? We've never, ever, looked down at someone because of their age — we know better than anyone that a 12-year-old can be hardcore. How? We were all hardcore when we were 12. That said, our magazine is aimed at people 18 and over, but if you can keep up, you're welcome to come along.

→ 1) Why does Dreamcast have fewer buttons than the other leading consoles? I need more destructive control! 2) At the end of *Disruptor* on PlayStation, Insomniac mentions that the sequel is on its way. What happened to that? 3) How about a bi-monthly or quarterly magazine devoted to videogame and CG production techniques? Thanks for your time!
gardner@jps.net

1) We're not sure, although we think at least part of the reason is that Sega figured the analog triggers would be enough to make up for a lack of buttons. 2) Sadly, Disruptor didn't sell well, so don't

expect a sequel. 3) Keep an eye out for Computer Arts, a US version of the English magazine that Imagine Media is bringing out soon as a one-shot. It may become a regularly scheduled magazine if it does well.

→ There are a lot of people who read your magazine here in Canada; how come your sweepstakes are only valid in the States and not in Canada?
fgfadi@hotmail.com

Unfortunately the logistics of dealing with an international sweepstakes are just way too complex to make it practical. Malheureusement, la logistique de traiter des sweepstakes internationaux est trop complexe pour le rendre pratique.

→ In your November issue, you mentioned nVidia's GeForce 256 as a possible graphics chip for X-Box. One of the specs you gave for the chipset doesn't sound very powerful at all. 15 polygons/sec? I could probably get my TI-99 to do that! I think that calls for a correction or something, right?
Alan Kruger
akruger@kent.edu

Well, we never said that was the maximum, did we? Anyway, we punched a million tiny zeros into the offending editor using an owl to remind him to always check the decimal place.

→ When I hear everybody complaining about the prices of games, it makes me sick. You guys have it made in the States. Up in Canada, we pay $70 for games. That is $30 more than what you guys pay. Instead of paying $199 for Dreamcast at launch, I pay $299.

I feel as if Canadians are being screwed. I plan on getting Playstation2, and I can't wait to see how much that costs up here. If there are any other reasons, aside from the crappy exchange rate, could you please tell me why the prices

are so high in Canada?
Greg Canton
kickass@ignmail.com

Well, with today's exchange rate (US$1 = C$.68), $70 Canadian is only US$47 per game (and $203 for the Dreamcast), which is about right, since most US games actually cost around $45 when new. The difference is easily made up by Canada's high sales tax, but hey — you guys get free health care and generous welfare benefits while we starve in the gutters, so don't complain. (Unless you're in western Canada, in which case you can complain because you pay more in taxes than you get in benefits, but since we have a lot of readers in the Maritime provinces, we really don't want to be a forum for that kind of discussion. Take it to Macleans.)

Feel like a tool?

I was just wondering that if I were to have enough money, would I be able to get my hands on a PlayStation2 Tool? I hear it costs about two grand, but is it available to the public?
segaboy182@hotmail.com

Actually, the cost of the Linux-based Tool is closer to $20,000. Sony won't sell them to you unless you're a developer, but the company is planning a line of workstations based on the Emotion Engine processor. See our news story last issue for details.

■ PLAYSTATION 2 TOOL

TOOL
PlayStation2

→Retroview

January 1995

It was the dawning of a new era in games — and magazines

→ January, 1995: Following the release of both the Saturn and PlayStation systems in Japan, Sega and Sony geared up for their US launches, leaving other hardware developers in a desperate race to grab market share before their competitors arrived. Philips' CD-i division and Trip Hawkins' 3DO Company would react by shifting their focus from all-purpose systems to hardcore gaming machines, while Atari would slash the price of Jaguar. All would fall drastically short on the software front and be dead within 18 months. Nintendo, with Ultra 64 far from release, would try to keep US gamers' attention with the release of Rare's *Donkey Kong Country* for Super NES. Revealing all the hardware companies'

■ *Killer Instinct.* The game Nintendo said would make Ultra 64. Yeah, forget that Miyamoto guy . . .

attempts to avoid the Sony hammer was the premiere issue of **Next Generation**, a different kind of magazine, one dedicated to covering hardcore gaming issues for intelligent readers with an insider's perspective. It was a bold move, and one most publishers — content to put out kiddie pubs — thought would fail. Five years later, we're still proving them wrong.

VIDEOGAMING FOR THE NINETIES!
→**Next**Gen
12/95
Next Generation Magazine

The looming **videogame wars** of **1995**

CD-ROM ■ 3DO ■ Sega ■ Nintendo ■ Sony ■ Jaguar ■ Arcade ■ On-Line ■ CD-I ■ SNK

What we were rating

What we reviewed while waiting for PlayStation and Saturn
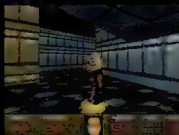
■ FIFA INT'L. SOCCER	■ ALIEN VS. PREDATOR	■ DOOM 2	■ SHAQ FU	■ LITIL DIVIL
■ System: 3DO	■ System: Jaguar	■ System: PC	■ System: Genesis	■ System: CD-I
■ Publisher: EA	■ Publisher: Atari	■ Publisher: GT	■ Publisher: EA	■ Publisher: Phillips
■ NG rating: ★★★★★	■ NG rating: ★★★★☆	■ NG rating: ★★★☆☆	■ NG rating: ★★☆☆☆	■ NG rating: ★☆☆☆☆

Top 10
movies of '95

Rank	Movie	Total Gross (in millions)	Release	Opening (in millions)
1	Toy Story	$191.75	11/22/95	$29.14
2	Batman Forever	$184.03	6/16/95	$52.78
3	Apollo 13	$172.06	6/30/95	$25.35
4	Pocahontas	$141.57	6/23/95	$29.53
5	Ace Ventura: When Nature Calls	$108.36	11/10/95	$37.80
6	GoldenEye	$106.43	11/17/95	$26.21
7	Jumanji	$100.48	12/15/95	$11.08
8	Casper	$100.28	5/26/95	$22.09
9	Seven	$100.11	9/22/95	$13.95
10	Die Hard: With a Vengeance	$100.01	5/19/95	$22.16

■ TOY STORY

Where are they now?

Here's the launch team of **Next Generation**, and what they're doing today

■ **Neil West**, editor-in-chief; **Editorial Director**, garageband.com

■ **Doug Perry**, managing editor; **Editor**, ign.psx.com

■ **Trent Ward**, reviews editor; **Editor**, ign.pc.com

■ **Laura Morris**, art director; **Art Director**, *Business 2.0*

■ **Jonathan Simpson-Bint**, publisher; **President**, games division, Imagine Media

■ **Doug Faust**, ad manager; **Publisher**, console group, Imagine Media

BackwardsCompatible

We watched the PR manager die 11 times in a row as he tried to get to a special spot. See the screen he finally enabled us to capture on page 30. **Fifth anniversary? Don't you mean quinquennial? Of course. Read all about it on page 25.** We spent 60 hours straight at the office producing **NG 24**, but all we got was a T-shirt. Read about what some developers' girlfriends will do to help them survive crunch time on page 82. **23 Dreamcast ratings in two inches. Page 104.** We review a game with the atomic symbol Ag on page 103. **These dogs have legs. Er, wheels. Page 99.** So that's why that kid is smiling — he's standing in the bushes. Page 2. **This team took their name from the one thing that survives a crash. And they used to work at Radical. Page 40.** We called *Doom II* "more of the same" in **NG 01**. Find out how many stars it got on page 110. **Trespasser II? We raise the specter on page 51.** In a nod to the gameplay scourge of **NG 01**, we review a modern FMV game on page 98. **The capital of Michigan is Lansing. Find out how you can control the capital of Novistrana on page 42.** Last issue, PlayStation3. This issue, Dreamcast2. See the rumor report on page 13. **No, they're not mothballs, they're actually like shiny duct tape. Page 6.** Is it rendered or hand-drawn? You make the call on page 64. **Every time we see this particular bit of "hardware," we can't help chuckling. See for yourself on page 109.** The only people who'd be offended by this are other Nazis — and who *cares* what they think? Page 96. **The screenshot that made us all go "Woo!" is at the bottom left of page 29.** Would referencing Backwards Compatible in Backwards Compatible cause an infinite loop? Find out on page 111. **Would referencing Backwards Compatible in Backwards Compatible cause an infinite loop? Find out on...**

→ **Next**Month **Tekken Tag Tournament**

NextGen **02/00** on sale January 18, 2000
Smart readers have already subscribed. To find out how you can save money and guarantee your copy, turn to the subscription card insert

Some secrets come back to haunt you.

Just days after surviving the grisly disaster at the mansion lab, Jill Valentine resigns from S.T.A.R.S. and attempts to escape a nightmarish city in ruins. Trapped in a town crawling with hordes of flesh-eating zombies, hideous mutants, and a relentless new nemesis, she must rely on cunning and brute force to stay alive. What she soon discovers is that the evil created by Umbrella Corporation's bio-tech terror is even more horrifying than she ever imagined...

It's in your blood.

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